Primary Encounters:
towards a conceptual model of place relations in outdoor adventure education

Amy E. Smallwood, MA

Lancaster University

University of Cumbria, Institute of Science and the Environment

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

Abstract

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) was formally introduced in the early-mid 1900s to address certain societal ills. At the time, the focus was on the decline of physical and moral character in young boys, and the outdoors was seen as an ideal environment to address these concerns. In today's culture, however, increasing awareness of environmental concerns has highlighted a need for pedagogy focused on human-place relations leading to moral change that inspires pro-environmental behaviours. A growing body of literature suggests that OAE experiences contribute to human relationships with the more-than-human world. However, a thematic analysis of the literature reveals a disconnect between the sociocultural foundations of OAE pedagogy, the onto-epistemological assumptions that inform pedagogy, and the resulting human-nature relations. Additionally, the literature does not adequately address the nature of relationship or how 'relationship' might translate into behaviours.

This thesis employs a phenomenological lens to the question of relationship, challenging the onto-epistemological foundations of OAE pedagogy that are still influenced by problematic sociocultural structures. I argue that the roots of traditional OAE pedagogy encourage adversarial human-nature relations and suggest new onto-epistemological structures that encourage a different quality of relations leading to a sense of kinship and an ethic of care. Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, experiences of the natural sublime, and indigenous ontologies are combined to suggest a phenomenon of *primary encounters* that has the potential to shift onto-epistemological assumptions and lead to more place-inclusive pedagogy.

Drawing on my own experiences in OAE, I utilise autoethnography to both illustrate and test the concept of primary encounters. A thematic analysis of autoethnographic data reveals the ways in which embodiment, aesthetics, time, and practice contribute to a sense of mutuality and reciprocity between humans and the more-than-human world through primary encounters. Based on this autoethnographic data, techniques for applying primary encounters in OAE pedagogy are suggested.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgements

Taking on this research topic was a daunting task, as anyone who has done a PhD will tell you. Adding to the enormity of the research, I completed this project in a part-time capacity while maintain a busy full-time job, studying remotely and cobbling together the means to fund my tuition and other related expenses. I could not have made it this far without the unfailing support of my community, which is far-reaching, generous, and empowering in all the right ways.

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Emeritus Chris Loynes, without whom I likely never would have begun this journey. Chris provided all that I could have hoped for in a PhD supervisor—encouragement, challenging questions, lists of things to read, and constant reminders of the importance of my research. Someone had given me advice when I started exploring PhD programmes, "Don't choose the institution; choose your supervisor and go to their institution." That was the best advice I received, and because of it I couldn't have asked for a better supervisor.

Many other colleagues at the University of Cumbria provided feedback, guidance, and help along the way. Among these are Prof. Heather Prince, Dr. Lisa Fenton, Prof. Tom Grimwood, Dr. Tracey Hayes, and Dr. Jamie McPhie. Thanks to each of you for your guidance and direction at key points along the way.

Dr. Bob Henderson deserves some credit for planting the seed for my thesis topic in 2008 at an Association for Experiential Education conference.

Dr. Michael Lyons helped me to develop many of the thoughts that eventually became the topic of this research. Lyons, the opportunity to team-teach with you remains one of my fondest classroom teaching experiences.

Dr. Jill Graper Hernandez began influencing my thinking way back when we were college students sharing a house we affectionately called "the Doctor's Office." Jill provided early guidance during the research proposal stage, helping me think through the direction my research question might take. Graper, thank you for seeing the philosopher in me, encouraging me along the way, and helping me to maintain momentum and continue to see value in the process.

Dr. Lina Heaster-Ekholm's support was instrumental in my ability to make progress, especially through the difficult periods when I felt stuck or lost. For two years Lina and I met every two weeks for mutual accountability and goal setting. Lina, your ability to complete your doctorate while giving birth to and caring for your first child, and in the middle of Covid, is more impressive to me than all the combined hardships the two of us persevered through during our expedition leadership days (which include, among other things, extended camping and traveling in sub-zero degree temperatures, jumping through a hole in the ice of a deeply frozen lake, losing a canoe over a waterfall, consistently lighting fires during weeks of downpour in order to make food and purify water, and completing the grand portage).

I'd also like to thank my 6-month family, which is how we affectionately refer to our master's degree cohort who completed the first Advanced Wilderness Leadership Practicum at Honey Rock Camp in 2001. You all helped to make me who I am today, and I am beyond grateful to each of you for over 20 years of friendship, support, laughter, and celebrating with ale. You know who you are; let's plan our next reunion.

My family provided support and encouragement throughout this process, knowing when to ask how things were going, when not to ask, and coming to visit when I was living in the UK—an expensive and long journey. Thank you for your endless love and support.

Lastly, I'd like to thank (or possibly not thank?) Junko and Maya. While you constantly got in the way, sat on my keyboard, brought me "presents," positioned yourself exactly in front of the webcam, and generally made it clear that my sole purpose in life is to serve you… for some reason I still like you. Thank you for keeping me warm on cold winter nights and making sure my house is free of mice.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the ideas, findings, analysis, results, and conclusions presented in this thesis are entirely my own work and have not been the subject of submission in any other academic institution. I also confirm that the research and papers used have been properly referenced.

Publications

Part of the research presented in this PhD thesis has been published in the following:

Smallwood, A. (2022). Towards a relational ontology: re-thinking human-nature relations in outdoor adventure education. In: 9th International Outdoor Education Research Conference (IOERC9), 18-22 July 2022, Ambleside, UK. (Presentation Abstract).

Loynes, C. & Smallwood, A. (2023) "Adventure and the Sublime: A quest for transformation or transcendence?" In P. Reid & E. Brymer (Eds.) *Adventure Psychology*. (pp. 187-202). Routledge

Smallwood, A. E. (2023) "Primary Encounters: Relational ontology and ecoflourishing." In Bouma-Prediger, S. & Carson, N. (Eds.) *Ecoflourishing and Character: Multidisciplinary Christian perspectives.* Routledge. (Forthcoming).

Part 1: Mapping the Terrain

> *We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it* (Berry, 2012, p. 220).

This section comprises phase one of the research which sought to answer the question, "How have historical and cultural influences shaped pedagogical approaches to outdoor adventure education in the United States, and what onto-epistemological assumptions guide these approaches?" Chapter 1 gives an overview of the project by first discussing a rationale, philosophical position, and identifying the problem. Following this I provide an outline of the research questions and the research design. Chapter 2 summarizes the sociological and historical context of outdoor adventure education in the United States, with a specific focus on the emergence of Outward Bound USA and the Boy Scouts of America. I then provide further context by summarizing the research around a sense of place and place-responsive pedagogies, suggesting that while these concepts are helping to address problematic historical paradigms, they lack a rootedness in supportive onto-epistemological assumptions.

Chapter 1: Background and Context

1.1 Background of the study

This research project was born out of curiosities. It first started with a line of questioning related to where we choose to locate outdoor adventure education (OAE) programmes in North America. Why the outdoors? In what ways does the environment contribute to the overall aims of OAE experiences? This led to a survey of the historical and cultural influences of traditional OAE objectives and pedagogy, as outlined in the following chapter. From here, it has become clear that traditional approaches to OAE are no longer relevant in the age of the Anthropocene and with the threat of climate change.

What initiated these curiosities? I was first introduced to traditional OAE programmes in early 2001. While my upbringing included many opportunities to go camping, hiking, and skiing, prior to 2001 I had not participated in any formalized version of outdoor adventure education. In January of that year I entered a graduate programme titled the "6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum" (6-month WLP). This programme involved living and travelling in various outdoor settings with a cohort of 6 others. We were students on expeditions for the first 5 months, after which we transitioned to being instructors for adolescent youth in the summer programmes. The 6-month WLP programme, or Advanced WLP as it later became known, involved an 18-day winter camping expedition in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, a 6-week expedition in the Texas desert which included backpacking through Big Bend National Park and canoeing the Rio Grande River, a 4-day bikepacking trip in the Nicolet National Forest, and a 4-day rock climbing trip at Devils Lake State Park. During this intense and immersive experience, I journaled daily. As a group, we also kept a group journal for the two longer trips.

This unique educational experience eventually led to a career in OAE, leading expeditions and eventually finding my way into university teaching and helping students develop their own pathways to OAE careers. My introductory experience in the Northwoods and the desert created the lens through which I led and taught others to lead. As a leader and instructor, I modelled my previous experiences as a student,

focusing primarily on personal growth and character development. The wilderness environment was important to this work, but it was not often a direct focus.

It wasn't until I started teaching philosophy and ethics that my mindset began to shift. It was a slow, glacial shift that is difficult to trace. Still, a few waypoints can be identified. This shift was partially due to the things I was reading. Some of the influential authors whose work I consumed during those years included Annie Dillard, Anne Lamott, John Balzar, Rebecca Solnit, Robert Macfarlane, Barry Lopez, and David Abram.[1] In a 2014 entry in my personal journal, I articulated this shift in thinking as follows:

> Barry Lopez's book is becoming an important one for me. My moods and impressions of the natural world are finding words through his careful description and interpretation of the Arctic region. I think this is important intellectual work—like the slow process that smooths out rocks at the bottom of a riverbed. I feel like it's beginning to frame a small shift for me—or, rather, a large shift—taking years of time spent in the wilderness and moving to a place where perhaps I can give back. (Personal Journal, 29 April, 2014).

Around this same timeframe (2014-2016), I also began a new morning routine at my home in California. I was living in a second story apartment, with a deck that pushed its way into and under the branches of a massive oak tree—a California black Oak that was several centuries old and approximately 80 feet tall. As I sat on my porch, drinking my morning coffee, I would watch the various lifeforms that depended on this tree for food or shelter. There were several year-round residents—scrub jays, acorn woodpeckers, oak bushtits, grey squirrels, northern flickers, Anna's hummingbirds, nuthatches. Turkeys would scratch for food under the Oak's canopy, coming through in the morning and again at dusk. The Nuttall's woodpecker was an elusive visitor; I heard his presence more often than seeing it. The tree was also home to a colony of ants that learned to make their way into my kitchen via a poorly placed hanging mechanism for my bird feeder. It took me a while to realize they were coming from the tree, at which point I promptly removed their parachute-chord highway.

[1] The influence of these authors will be evident throughout this work.

Spring, summer, and fall brought an array of migrating birds. While some species of finches remained throughout the year, the pine siskins would pass through during migration, along with various species of hummingbirds, grosbeaks, and flycatchers. One year a pair of starlings took over an old woodpecker's nest, while a pair of red shouldered hawks nested in the redwood tree across the street. Occasionally I would see a coyote or a fox, and once there was a black bear wandering through the field. Somehow, in my mind, anyways, the Black Oak was the center of this bustling network of life that flourished outside my front door, providing food, shade, and shelter.

On May 30, 2016, I was awakened at 5:30am by a massive crash outside that shook the building. I made my way to the porch, and the ancient Oak was lying on the ground, having missed my apartment by just a few inches. This event didn't surprise me—I had noticed a break in her roots the day before, and my landlady had been working with an arborist to try and save the tree once she discovered evidence of root rot. Despite the lack of surprise, my emotions immediately welled up. My heart grieved the loss of this companion, and the companions that were fed and sheltered by her branches and fruit.

The Oak's corpse lay on the ground for the remainder of the summer, after she had been delimbed. Eventually, my landlady planted a red maple in her place, with the rationale that maples grow fast and it would eventually be able to provide some shade to the yard the way the Oak had. But the inhabitants of the old Oak—the titmouse, scrub jay, woodpeckers, and others—were dispersed and did not return. The turkeys didn't even come around as often after she fell.

Leading up to the year 2014, I had participated in numerous expeditions to remote locations across North America. I spent close to 60 nights per year sleeping under the stars in various seasons and climates. And yet, despite all those experiences, I had never cultivated the kind of relationship with place that happened during these later years in Northern California. I mourned the loss of the Oak the way I would have mourned the passing of a friend. And it wasn't just the Oak that I lost. The Oak provided a relational connection to many others, and all was severed when the Oak no longer existed.

I never loved the town of Redding, California. The climate was not to my liking, nor was the culture. But somehow that little corner of oak savannah wormed its way into my affections like a virus, in ways I couldn't quite explain. I never had what I would consider to be an awe-inspiring, sublime experience on my porch. But time, familiarity, and the language of the more-than-human world forged a type of relationship that I hadn't previously experienced—one that led to a deep level of care and compassion for the various aspects of the ecological landscape.

The development of this relationship certainly had external influences—including the authors mentioned above as well as unknown cultural and social influences. But something else made this encounter with the more-than-human world unique, something that made me want to care for the earth from a place of concern and affection rather than duty. Why hadn't this mentality been cultivated on the countless wilderness expeditions in which I had taken part? Given the intentionality of these experiences and the focus on learning and growth, one would assume that similarly strong relational bonds would result.

Reflecting on this progression within my own experiences led to curiosity about whether OAE might be missing a valuable opportunity. While my OAE expeditions often presented a focus on respecting the land through which we would be travelling, the focus perpetuated a humans-apart-from-nature mentality. We were just travelling through, so we respected the land in the same way one might behave when a guest in someone else's home. And, to an extent, this was true. My OAE expeditions often took place far from where any of us actually lived. We were there temporarily, sojourners looking for new experiences that would open new avenues for learning. Our care and concern for the places through which we travelled were short-lived, only ensuring that we erased evidence of our presence as if our presence was a plague on the land.

1.2 The need for a theoretical study

After years of attending conferences and research symposiums, I have become a bit weary of the imbalance between empirical research and theoretical research. While empirical research is undeniably valuable, some empirical studies feel a bit prescribed, formulaic, and/or driven by a desire to "give them what they want." I wanted to

conduct my research differently, to focus on theory, to dig into the philosophical foundations that ground much of the empirical research.

I recently found solace in the company of like-minded thinkers, who have dubbed conventional qualitative research as being often "reductionist, hegemonic, and sometimes oppressive" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 613). Following in St. Pierre's wake, Honan and Bright (2016) suggest moving beyond the normative structures of the doctoral thesis in search of more creative and innovative approaches to generating knowledge. Honan and Bright take much of their cues from Deleuze, offering the following in support of their argument that the "macro-structure" of a typical doctoral thesis suppresses creativity:

> The problem is not to direct or methodologically apply a thought which pre-exists in principle and in nature, but to bring into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other work, all the rest is arbitrary, mere decoration). To think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender "thinking" in thought (Deluze, as quoted in Honan and Bright, 2016, p. 733).

Much like a patchwork quilt, I approached this research project with a desire to stitch together a philosophical framework, connecting what often feels like disparate studies containing nuggets of truth without fully addressing sometimes contradictory theoretical frameworks. At the risk of mixing metaphors, what I was sensing at the time (without knowing it) was what Mary Midgley called "Philosophical Plumbing." In her words:

> Plumbing and philosophy are both activities that arise because elaborate cultures like ours have, beneath their surface, a fairly complex system which is usually unnoticed but which sometimes goes wrong. In both cases this can have serious consequences (1992, p. 139).

In the pages that follow, the research unfolds by first drawing attention to onto-epistemological assumptions that lie beneath the surface of Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) as it is practiced in the United States. Revealing inconsistencies between emerging values and dispositions needed to address our climate change crisis and the historical and cultural foundations of pedagogical practices, I suggest Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and notion of 'encounter' as a way to phenomenologically explore a different kind of relationship between humans and the

more-than-human world. This exploration makes use of Merleau-Ponty's version of phenomenology, paying particular attention to embodiment as it relates to the way humans engage with the more-than-human world through OAE experiences. I then explore the phenomenon of the natural sublime, noting the various features of a sublime experience as described by philosophers and nature writers. Martin Buber's notion of 'encounter' is then knitted together with the phenomenon of the sublime to suggest a way of relating to the more-than-human world through *primary encounters*, making connections to relational ontology and indigenous ways of knowing. The notion of primary encounters is further developed as a conceptual framework that employs new onto-epistemological assumptions, paving the way for the development of an ethic that drives pro-environmental behaviours. Finally, I suggest ways in which primary encounters might inform pedagogy within OAE, shifting the focus from place-responsive pedagogies to a place-inclusive pedagogy.

One of the most common questions I have received when I have talked about this research these last few years is, "What's it for?" In a world that places unquestioned value upon objective, empirical research, the question is understandable. Empirical research has paved the way for countless technologies and advances in physical and mental health. In recent months the terms 'peer-reviewed' and 'control trials' have become part of household conversations as people evaluate the effectiveness of COVID vaccines and treatments. What place does theoretical research have in the presence of such empirical brilliance?

All research must acknowledge and identify the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that guide the research questions and methodology—the philosophical plumbing that directs foundational ideas. Subsequently, metaphysical and epistemological assumptions depend on human knowledge and values, which depends on scientific research. It is a reciprocal relationship, and without equal attention to both, our picture is incomplete. New knowledge and scientific advancements must push us to question our philosophical assumptions, and researchers have called for a renewed attention to these philosophical assumptions within outdoor adventure education pedagogy (Harrison, 2010). The still relatively new field of ecological science, the reality of climate change, and our entrance into the Anthropocene are all reasons

why we need to question whether our onto-epistemological assumptions are still relevant.

1.3 Rationale for the study

As mentioned above, my entrance into Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) began in the summer of 2001, leading wilderness expeditions in the Northwoods of the American Midwest. The organization I worked for—Honey Rock Camp, which was affiliated with Wheaton College—modelled their "High Road" expeditions after Outward Bound's philosophy and pedagogy. High Road expeditions were designed to help participants cultivate relationships with themselves, others, God, and the environment. The purpose was stated as follows:

> The purpose of High Road is to promote the development of Christian maturity in others: to increase each participant's capacity to wholeheartedly love God and to love neighbor as self. This is achieved by providing opportunities of action and reflection which facilitate the self-evaluation of personal values and capabilities and encourage a greater commitment to Jesus Christ and the consistent practice of Biblical values (High Road Instructor's Manual, 2001).

This "Statement of Purpose" was accompanied by a list of some twenty-five goals/objectives, organized under five categories: spiritual depth, social competence, psychological awareness and adequacy, mental acumen, and physical fitness. Of these, only one of the goals discussed the natural environment directly, "To develop an increased awareness and appreciation for the natural environment as God's creation and an increased sense of personal responsibility for its care and preservation" (High Road Instructor's Manual, 2001). While "appreciation for the natural environment" was one of the stated goals, it was rarely a central theme in my or my colleagues' programme designs. Aside from teaching proper Leave No Trace (LNT) principles at the outset of the trip and identifying a few trees, there was little to no content designed to help cultivate this sphere of relationship. There was an unspoken assumption that living and traveling in a "wilderness" environment would naturally result in "awareness and appreciation… and an increased sense of personal responsibility."

I have a vivid memory from the final trip that I led that first summer. It was an outdoor orientation trip for incoming university students. The last night, before our

final run-in, we discussed the idea of wilderness. After two weeks of living and traveling in the wilderness, I asked my participants "what is wilderness?" This led to a rich and rather philosophical discussion about the nature of wilderness, which was interpreted by the participants (and by myself at the time) as a difficult, challenging place, where character and integrity are tested and refined. Students discussed this in broad terms, relating it to other "wilderness experiences" (e.g. navigating difficult life circumstances, transitions, etc.).

While there was value in this discussion in terms of learning resilience and fortitude, looking back on these early experiences leaves me disillusioned by my own inattentiveness to the possibilities of a deeper ecological relationship. With the advantage of hindsight, I see now that whatever "appreciation for the natural environment" was being cultivated was unlikely to result in an eco-centric environmental ethos or pro-environmental behaviours (discussed in more detail in the following chapter). This caused me to wonder… what is the ontological and epistemological value of locating experiential pedagogy in the outdoors? What does this setting add to the experience? And what might we be missing?

1.4 Summary of literature

A qualitative study by Daniel (2010), surveying 227 wilderness trip participants from 25 different years, found that the wilderness setting on an Outward Bound style trip was described by the majority of participants (46%) to be either a 'catalyst' for personal reflection or a 'crucible' for the trial and testing of endurance. Another 5% of participants simply saw it as a 'canvas,' or a backdrop to the greater aims of the trip (intra/interpersonal growth). The rest didn't indicate that the wilderness environment was significant at all. The quality of relationship invoked by these words is impersonal, even adversarial. In an age where climate change, eco-illiteracy (Orr, 1992), and Nature Deficit Disorder (Louv, 2006) are some of our greatest challenges, it seems that outdoor educators can do better. Mannion & Lynch (2015) claim that the environment, while being recognized as one of the purposes of outdoor education, has traditionally been overshadowed by an over-emphasis on the other two purposes (personal & social development and outdoor activities). Bonnett (2003, 2009, 2012) suggests that the metaphysical conceptions of our relations with nature must be re-imagined in order to

effect pro-environmental behaviours that are sourced in morality and an eco-centric environmental ethos.

Through the course of this research I have encountered many quantitative and qualitative studies that utilized conventional research methods to analyse human relations with the more-than-human world. These studies use various surveys and tools—such as the Nature Relatedness Scale (Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy, 2009), Biophilia Hypothesis (Kellert and Wilson, 1993), and the Connectedness to Nature Scale (Mayer and Frantz, 2004)—to study human relations with the more-than-human world. However, each research project I read about seemed to ignore the deeper philosophical questions that drive assumptions about relationships—namely, the quality of those relationships and the onto-epistemological assumptions that guide our interpretations of encounters with the more-than-human world.

Several of the studies mentioned above present strong evidence of correlation (between things like connectedness to nature and eco-friendly behaviours, or nature connectedness and happiness and wellbeing), but determining causal relationships has proven to be more complicated. As an example, Mayer and Frantz write, "At this time we have established that a significant positive relationship exists between these measures. Establishing a causal relationship between a person's sense of feeling connected to nature and eco-friendly acts is another matter, however" (2004, p. 512). In outdoor adventure education, there are many factors to consider relating to causation. Some examples include where the programme was located, what the overall outcomes were, what pedagogical approach was utilised, how far participants had to travel from home, etc. There's also the question of transference. Does connectedness to nature extend beyond programmatic or home locations? If so, can the OAE experience be considered a cause?

Most studies that focus on causation isolate specific variables and then design experiments that require both an experimental group and a control group with random assignment to establish nonspuriousness. These random control trials (RTC) have proven to be ethically problematic for some aspects of outdoor adventure education (Gabrielsen *et al.*, 2016). RCT's are also dependent upon being able to isolate variables, which is problematic when variables can include personality and/or individualistic

differences in pedagogy, weather, and other conditions that are subjective and difficult to control.

Researchers have called for more studies related to how participants interpret and conceptualize the more-than-human world, the meanings they attach to their relationships, and the environmental behaviours that result (Daniel, 2010; Cosgriff, 2011; Beery and Wolf-Watz, 2014). For this project, my initial intent was to answer this call, addressing the gap by exploring the phenomenology of human relationships with the more-than-human world through OAE experiences. The broad question that guided my initial literature review and research design was, "How can outdoor adventure education be used to cultivate relationships with the more-than-human world that result in an eco-centric environmental ethos?"

To answer this question, and to truly explore human experiences of relationship with the more-than-human world, more theoretical grounding is needed. Specifically, the nature of *relationship* must first be addressed, including the social, cultural, and onto-epistemological influences that shape our conception and experience of relationship and the implications these have on our choice in the location of programming and pedagogy.

1.5 Identifying the problem

As discussed briefly above, climate change has led us to a point of crisis. Many scientists and geologists (Zalasiewicz *et al.*, 2011) have suggested that we have entered into a new epoch, titled the Anthropocene, where humans are the largest influencers of geologic and environmental changes. Civilization has been slow to react. So far, we have (slowly) sought to address this crisis through a focus on fossil fuel consumption, identifying and developing alternative forms of power, encouraging practices of recycling and reusing products, etc. These solutions, however well-intentioned, only skim the surface of the problem. What is needed is deep work, philosophical work, a radical paradigm shift in our metaphysical foundations. This is the bedrock upon which we build our epistemology and axiology and which ultimately influences our values and actions.

This is big work, important work, the scale of which feels impossible. As one individual, I cannot hope to address this problem on such a massive scale. I can, however, influence my little corner of the globe.

In thinking about the kinds of ontological shifts that I believe need to happen, I considered my own paradigm shift in this regard. I used to be much more close-minded and subscribed to largely anthropocentric philosophical assumptions with a certain degree of moral superiority. This was despite what some would consider an above-average amount of time spent in remote, natural environments. At one point in time, I was spending close to a quarter of every year leading outdoor adventure experiences, sleeping under the stars, in various seasons and climates. While a paradigm shift did happen, it was slow and reluctant, and happened when I was spending much less time in the field. In hindsight, I couldn't help but wonder why 15 years as an adventure guide and educator hadn't made much of a difference in changing my relationships with, and thus my behaviours towards, the more-than-human world.

As I've contemplated this and deconstructed the historical and sociocultural roots of OAE and how it is practiced in the United States (chapter 2), I've defined what I see as the central problem that is driving this research. Largely due to its sociocultural roots and onto-epistemological foundations, my analysis demonstrates how outdoor adventure education has more often served to alienate humans from the more-than-human world by reinforcing a sense of 'otherness,' a denial of agency for the more-than-human world, and an overall mindset of human superiority.

1.6 Philosophical position

Consistent with my emphasis on relations, I approach this research project through the lens of phenomenology (discussed below) and from the philosophical posture of post-qualitative analysis and new materialism. Gamble, Hanan, and Nail (2019) suggest that, while new materialism doesn't have a singular definition, the various approaches to new materialism share a common commitment: "to problematize the anthropocentric and constructivist orientations of most twentieth-century theory in a way that encourages closer attention to the sciences by the humanities" (p. 111). Coole and Frost discuss new materialism as a plurality of theories within contemporary philosophy and social science, identifying one theme of new

materialism as, “an ontological reorientation that is resonant with, and to some extent informed by, developments in natural science: an orientation that is posthumanist in the sense that it conceives of matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency” (2010, pp. 6–7). New materialists challenge assumptions that matter is passive, suggesting a sense of aliveness and activity that pervades within matter. These views also challenge the notion of dualities and suggest greater fluidity between traditional binary categories.

Whereas in philosophy and social science this ontological turn is being referred to as ‘new’, I argue in this thesis that these notions are only new in the sense that they are just now gaining attention in western, Euro-centric thinking. Much of the work presented in this thesis is based on the writings of Martin Buber, for instance, whose philosophy of dialogue was ahead of its time in its recognition of relationality as reciprocal and *a priori*. Even earlier than Buber, many indigenous ontologies have long recognized the primacy of relations and the agency of matter. These ideas are central to the ontological arguments presented in chapter 4.

This philosophical position drives many of the assumptions that I carry into the project, namely: 1) that the research and the researcher are relationally and subjectively connected, 2) that the more-than-human world has and deserves agency apart from humans, 3) that we cannot truly comprehend aspects of the more-than-human world without acknowledging our relationship and dependency upon it, and 4) that a new materialist approach to metaphysics and epistemology is based in holism, which includes substances and the relationships between substances in ontological pluralism.

These assumptions will be apparent throughout the following text. Considering this theoretical stance, I make no attempt to investigate, analyse, or interrogate from a place of objectivity. Rather, my approach intends to invite and involve various perspectives, voices, and theories into my own experiences in an attempt to holistically conceive of the phenomenon of human relationships with the more-than-human world.

1.7 Methodology

Methodologically, this thesis is an exploration that utilises phenomenology in two ways. While qualitative researchers are familiar with phenomenology as a specific research methodology, the concept stems from a branch in philosophy that seeks to

describe and analyze the way that people perceive, experience, and interpret the world around them. Questions in phenomenology concern human experience and how humans interpret experience. Phenomenology has helped us deepen our understandings of concepts like perception, embodiment, and experiences of space and time.

1.7.1. Phenomenology as a philosophy

As a philosophy, phenomenology can be understood as "the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Smith, 2018). Phenomenology seeks to unpack the nature of human experience—how we make meaning from our experiences and how we assimilate this meaning into our onto-epistemological frameworks.

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900s as a counter-narrative to the objective sciences, calling into question the assumption of objectified reality. René Descartes' work in the mid 17th century had provided a foundation for these positivist sciences, making possible the myriad of scientific and technological achievements we enjoy today—automobiles, satellites, vaccines, cell phones. The objective sciences assume an ontological separation between the human subjective mind and the objective nature of the material world. The objective world is then broken down and studied mathematically, allowing the scientist to ascertain the 'true' nature of reality, thus opening the door for the manipulation of that reality for human progress, health, and vitality. Psychology was also developed on the heels of these assumptions, reducing human behaviour and experience into positivist terms in order to be studied mathematically.

Husserl criticized Cartesian and positivist perspectives, arguing that these sciences failed to acknowledge the interconnectedness of subjective human experience and the material world. Where the scientist is assumed to be separate, ensuring the objectivity of experimentation, there remains a hesitancy to acknowledge the immediate lived experience of the scientist, "for he cannot cease to live in the world as a human among other humans, or as a creature among other creatures, and his scientific concepts and theories necessarily borrow aspects of their character and texture from his untheorized, spontaneously lived experience" (Abram, 2017, p. 33).

This led Husserl to call for a return to the lived world as it is experienced in its felt immediacy (1999). Particularly for the human sciences, Husserl argued that research must consider the lived experience of human subjects, from their point of view. For Husserl, the only world we can know is the one we directly experience, the 'phenomenal' world, which is a subjective realm. Humans are metaphysically incapable of escaping our immediate lived experience and the confines of our own mental and subjective activity that is driven by experience. As one example, the scientist who is assuming an objectified distance from her experiment is continually responding to the world as she experiences it bodily—hunger, tiredness, emotions, etc (Abram, 2017). The phenomenal experience arguably impacts the mental activity related to the 'objective' research at hand and calls into question the nature of this objectivity. Epistemologically then, Husserl believed that knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge, the former having an impact on the latter directly or indirectly (Moustakas, 1994).

Thus problematizing the foundational assumptions of the objectified sciences, Husserl devoted himself to providing a solution—a way that science can progress on the assumption that empirical knowledge must first acknowledge the essence of the world as it is experienced, what he called *Lebenswelt*, or 'life-world'. "The life-world is the world of our immediately lived experience, *as* we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it" (Abram, 2017, p. 40). In an effort to tie philosophy to the scientific method, Husserl proposed phenomenological reduction as a way to shift science towards phenomenological onto-epistemological assumptions.

Husserl came to believe that the foundation of scientific inquiry is compromised by both the framework of science itself (assumptions of time, space, causality, etc.) and the psychological assumptions of the scientist. Phenomenological reduction allows phenomenologist to escape these two compromises through a process of bracketing, thus seeing the world as it is experienced. It is a meditative technique wherein the phenomenologist both identifies (the epoché) and acknowledges (the reduction proper) the taken-for-granted assumptions of her own experiences in the world—gravity, culture, our own bodies—thus freeing herself from the unquestioned acceptance of the everyday world. This reflective inquiry back into the nature of consciousness, Husserl argued, provided the needed philosophical foundation for scientific inquiry.

French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty sought to further phenomenological inquiry by challenging the assumptions within Husserl's reductionist method (Kafle, 2013). Merleau-Ponty wrote extensively about perception and embodiment, critiquing conventional philosophy and psychology as focusing too heavily on both rationalism and reductive concepts that distort the actual perceptive experience. Merleau-Ponty describes a world that is inseparable from our presence within it, and ourselves as inseparable from the world in which we inhabit—"Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside, and I am wholly outside myself" (1962, p. 407). On the basis of this, phenomenology cannot rely wholly on reductionism, but must take into account the perception that comes from the embodied experience: "My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'" (1962, p. 235).

A necessary element for Husserl's phenomenological reduction involves the transcendent mind, or ego. In order for me to properly bracket my immediate experiences of the life-world, I must have an ability to transcend these experiences—to mentally escape immediacy in order to identify and acknowledge the effects of the life-world. Merleau-Ponty rejected the transcendent mind, thus questioning phenomenological reduction as a viable approach to phenomenological inquiry. In Merleau-Ponty's own words, "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (as quoted in Telford, 2020, p. 50).

For Merleau-Ponty, the body was the primary medium through which we experience the world. Our physical bodies provide us with a means for relationship with the world—through touch, sight, taste, etc. While relationship also resides in the cognitive realm, Merleau-Ponty claimed that it must first begin with the physical and tactile interactions that only occur through embodied experiences. (Abram, 2017).

The concept of embodiment has been central to this research project and is connected in more detail in chapter 7 where I explore how aspects of human consciousness, our perceptions of time and space, and our embodied interactions with the more-than-human world play significant roles in shaping our relationships. Having discussed the philosophical side of phenomenology, it will be helpful to briefly discuss phenomenological research methodologies and the rationale for my own choice to use autoethnography as a context to explore these philosophical underpinnings.

1.7.2 Phenomenology as a research method

As mentioned earlier, phenomenology is both a philosophy and a qualitative research method. In utilizing phenomenology as a qualitative research method, "The intent is that researchers will ground themselves in the philosophical foundations and through this understanding develop their own methods that are appropriate to the inquiry. The philosophy is the method" (Telford, 2020, p.52). Thus, phenomenology has guided both a theoretical desk study regarding the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human world and a qualitative study that considers my own lived experiences, the interpretation of those experiences, and how my own relationship with the more-than-human world has evolved as a result.

According to Patton, the foundational question of phenomenological research is "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomena for the person or group of people?"(2015, p. 104). Phenomenology seeks to describe the lived experience of an individual, which makes its methods as diverse as human individuals. As Telford states, "there is no consensus among philosophers as to what phenomenology is and correspondingly to how it is done" (2020, p. 51). Telford further identifies two streams of thought as it relates to 'doing' phenomenology. The first stream recognizes Husserl's phenomenology as purely descriptive. The process of bracketing, as described above, suspends the researcher's held beliefs about the phenomena at hand to a sufficient degree that allows the research to describe the raw experience. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty challenged that bracketing and phenomenological reduction is even possible, constituting the second stream.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, also referred to as existential phenomenology, was developed by Heidegger and sought to recognize and include the interpretive work of humans as we create meaning from pure descriptions of phenomena (Telford, 2020). The process of hermeneutics replaces bracketing with "a process of reciprocity between pre-understanding and understanding which, when translated into research methodology, allows for the acknowledgement of influential pre-judgments as well as the benefit of contextual expertise in the interpretive act" (Telford, 2020, p. 50). The hermeneutic approach to phenomenology recognizes humans as interpretive creatures with an inability to escape our own interpretations.

As stated above, I have approached this research from a post-qualitative theoretical stance. This stance challenges the notion that the researcher can be an objective observer of the phenomenon in question. Methodologically, then, I have conducted the research from the perspective of existential phenomenology. This allows the embodied experience and interpretations of the experience to be studied along with the phenomena in question—in this case, the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human world in the context of OAE experiences. It also allows for autoethnography to be part of the methodological framework.[2]

1.8 Research questions

While a research question is necessary to guide the methods, it is also understood within phenomenology that too much structure can undermine the research. According to Hycner (1999), "[T]here is an appropriate reluctance on the part of phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps" (p. 143). Hycner further elaborates by emphasizing the role the phenomena must play in the research itself. Imposing certain specific methods or research questions can diminish the integrity of the phenomenon. While some of this may be possible to determine at the outset, the researcher must be open to allowing the phenomena and emerging data to shape the research.

With this in mind, I began with a broad question to direct a desk study, which served to refine the phenomena to a sufficient degree for philosophical dialogue. This broad question, stated earlier, was "How can outdoor adventure education be used to cultivate relationships with the more-than-human world that result in an eco-centric environmental ethos?" As I headed down an exploratory path related to this question, it didn't take long for me to encounter philosophical and linguistic challenges with the word 'relationship' (Wildman, 2010).

Rather than engage with the full work of developing a philosophical theory of relations, which would be far too much to tackle in this thesis, I opted instead to utilise the work of Martin Buber as a framework for understanding human relationships with

[2] To provide for a more seamless reading experience, I have further detailed my methodology in chapter 10. Readers who prefer to have a fuller understanding of my methodology prior to engaging with the text are encouraged to read chapter 10 after the Introduction.

the more-than-human world. As will be revealed, connections between Buber's work and new materialism are evident in the way that Buber speaks of the in-between—that which exists between two substances. In this way, Buber moves beyond matter to consider the dynamics that are occurring between two material substances and enlivening these substances in a non-duality.

I studied Martin Buber in graduate school but had never come across his work being used to discuss human-nature relations. A literature review confirmed that very little work had been done in this area; indeed, I only came across one researcher who has connected Buber with human-nature relations (Blenkinsop, 2011; Blenkinsop and Scott, 2017).

This led to revised and more specific research questions:

1. What is a primary encounter?
2. How can the concept of primary encounters help to re-define human relationships with the more-than-human world in OAE?
3. What role do place and pedagogy play in the cultivation of primary encounters in OAE?

1.9 Research design

1.9.1 Phase one: mapping the terrain

An understanding of context—including historical, social, and cultural backgrounds—is vital for determining the onto-epistemological foundations of current practice. Additionally, autoethnography depends on sociocultural analysis of a lived experience (Hokkanen, 2017). Given this, I have begun my research with a look into the sociocultural paradigms that have influenced the development of outdoor adventure education in the United States. The guiding question for this phase was "How have historical and cultural influences shaped pedagogical approaches to outdoor adventure education in the United States, and what onto-epistemological assumptions guide these approaches?"

Chapter 2 provides a contextual analysis of OAE programmes and pedagogy, revealing a reliance upon Euro-centric onto-epistemological foundations that have seen little change since the early 1900s. A further analysis of this reveals the effects of

certain foundational assumptions on relational structures between humans and the more-than-human world (Bonnett, 2009). Further deconstructing these influences will till the soil to allow for the planting of new and different ways of thinking about and relating with the more-than-human world, including certain countercultural perspectives (e.g. indigenous, new materialist, etc).

To engage the relevant research, a literature review of Human-Nature Connection (HNC) research was conducted, providing an overview of the empirical landscape and highlight what research projects have uncovered regarding human relationships with the more-than-human world. The results of this literature review reveal a gap in the theoretical underpinnings of relationship and phenomenological understandings of how relationships with the more-than-human world develop through differing landscapes and pedagogical practices. The research also recommends additional clarity around what we mean by 'nature' (Harrison, 2010), and the reciprocal dynamic of human-nature relations (Bonnett, 2012). Rather than devoting a specific chapter to the literature review itself, findings have been disaggregated throughout the text to contextualize the research and allow for more fluid reading.

1.9.2 Phase two: the philosophical landscape

The guiding questions for phase two of the research were: 1) "How do we conceive of the primacy of human-nature relations?" and 2) "How do we understand human relations with the more-than-human world in ways that are not instrumental or causal in nature?" Using data from secondary sources, the intent here was to synthesize concepts related to primary relations with the more-than-human world, phenomenology and embodiment, the aesthetics of the sublime, human valuation of place, and the ways in which we interact with place through lived experience. To ensure a comprehensive range of texts for this desk study, a systematic search was conducted using the following keywords: aesthetics of the sublime, environmental alterity, intersubjective responsibility, ecological dialogue, relational ontology, and indigenous ontologies. What has emerged reveals distinct differences in how we understand relationships and a temptation to conceptualize these differences as dualistic rather than complementary.

Given the influence of romanticism on the development of outdoor education programmes (Roberts, 2012), the concept of the sublime and its relationship with aesthetics and moral responsibility was one focus of the philosophical desk study. Kant referred to the complex nature of the sublime as a 'negative pleasure'—a simultaneous feeling of displeasure and pleasure, or an oscillation between them (Brady, 2013). The pleasure comes from our imagination and an increased awareness of our moral capacities (freedom, reason, etc.). The negative comes from frustration over our inability to understand or take in what we are exposed to (formlessness) and the recognition of our physical helplessness (Brady, 2013). This negative aspect of pleasure is one quality distinguishing a 'sublime' experience from a mere aesthetic experience.

Emily Brady's understanding of Kantian sublime would postulate that sublime experiences open us up to an awareness of our freedom and moral capacity in relation to the sublime thing—that is, what makes me different from the vast mountain range is that I have the freedom to make moral decisions. For Brady, "sublime experiences of nature potentially lead to re-valuing of environments and extraordinary phenomena, increasing both self-understanding and the potential for an aesthetic-moral education with respect to nature—and our universe" (2013, p. 89).

The works of Martin Buber provided additional fodder for this philosophical landscape. Where Husserl and Kant both relied heavily on the subject in phenomenological explorations, Buber's work instead focuses on the relationships between objects/subjects. Most of Buber's writings and philosophical musings concern human-to-human relationships, however Buber makes inferences as to how these relational concepts might be translated to human relations with the more-than-human. Buber discusses concepts related to alterity and intersubjective responsibility which, when analyzed alongside aesthetics of the sublime and everyday lived experiences with the more-than-human world, have significant implications for relational ontology.

A final piece of the desk study involved relational ontology and indigenous perspectives. Relational ontology suggests that the relationship between substances is ontologically primary to the substances themselves (Schaab, 2013). We see this reflected in some of the ideas from ecofeminist and indigenous views of human-nature relations. Relational ontology is also a theme within animism (Ingold, 2006) and posthumanism (Mcphie, 2019). Tying together relational ontology with the concepts

mentioned above, this phase of the research aims to create a new theoretical lens through which to view human-nature relations.

1.9.3 Phase three: integration

The themes from the philosophical analysis of phase two are integrated into a conceptual model that describes a particular way of relating to the more-than-human world. The model, *primary encounters*, suggests a mode of relating that relies on a pluralistic ontology and metaphysical holism, leading to new ontological postures that recognize relational reciprocity between humans and the more-than-human world. The synthesis presents 4 features of a primary encounter and illustrates a process that includes 3 stages. The resulting relationship cultivates virtues of humility, respect, care, and responsibility towards the more-than-human world.

1.9.4 Phase four: primary encounter as lived experience

After developing a new conceptual model, the research turns to autoethnography as a means to illustrate and test the model. As phenomenology "proposes that a phenomenon be described instead of being explained or having its causal relations searched for" (Sadala and Adorno, 2002, p. 283), the aim of the qualitative study is, using autoethnography, to describe and reflexively evaluate my own experiences as both a participant and an educator in the outdoor industry.

The specific goal here is to explore how a relational ontology and non-binary approach to the more-than-human world interacts with embodied experience through primary encounters. Rather than conceptualizing myself as being 'in' nature or thinking 'of' nature, how might it look different to 'be with' and 'think with' nature? This will involve an exploration of previous encounters with the more-than-human world—exploring journals and photographs as well as memories.

1.9.5 Phase five: implications for practice

The final phase of the research explores implications for pedagogical practices and future research in outdoor adventure education. While the broad aims of this research project are to explore, challenge, and propose certain philosophical assumptions, I also acknowledge the importance of making research accessible and allowing it to inform practice. As illustrated by phase one, current and future practice

must consider current and future societal and environmental challenges. Outdoor adventure education has been slow to change, and while place-responsive pedagogical approaches illustrate steps in the right direction, they need to grow out of coherent philosophical and theoretical soil if they are to produce the kind of moral and societal change we need. Areas of further research will also be suggested, as well as limitations of the research.

1.10 Summary

Philosophical discussions related to OAE and pedagogy have struggled to keep pace with shifts in the cultural and scientific landscapes. We have been, in essence, attempting to build new structures and approaches without the proper foundations to support them and provide longevity. A solid foundation not only supports a structure, but it also allows for the possibility of future growth, expansion, and renovation.

This study seeks to provide such a foundation for OAE pedagogy and structure. By offering a more concrete 'why' for the 'what' and 'how' of transformational outdoor education, it is my hope that current and future educators will feel more stable and confident in their approaches. In turn, it is also my hope that new approaches to OAE will serve to redefine human relationships with the more-than-human world, leading to the mutual flourishing of both.

In the following chapters, I address this foundational need by first discussing the historical and sociological factors that influenced the emergence of OAE in the United States. This reveals a relational problem that positions the more-than-human world as an adversary to overcome. In Part Two, I explore Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, the phenomenology of experiences of the natural sublime, and relational ontology arising from indigenous philosophers. Part Three integrates these ideas into a conceptual model, primary encounters. This is then illustrated and tested through autoethnography. Finally, I suggest how this impacts ontological structures in OAE and what this might look like practically through place-inclusive pedagogy.

Chapter 2: Nature as Adversary

Ontologies in the Western world have historically focused on *substances* in the pursuit of a first philosophy, particularly as it relates to the nature of being human. This has in turn encouraged a focus on individual entities. While we know experientially that humans are relational beings, in terms of our ontological frameworks we have chosen to focus almost exclusively on the substance of humans rather than the relationships that enliven substance. This has influenced our epistemology in that we have tended to rely on a reductionist approach to understanding substance. Aspects of the natural world, including humans, are broken down, analyzed, and compared to establish understanding of the various components of the substance and how these components interact (these ontological structures will be explored in much more detail in chapter 5).

As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, pedagogical trends within outdoor adventure experiences have seen little change since their emergence in the early 1900s, and as I will show in this chapter, these pedagogical trends reflect substance-based onto-epistemological traditions. This chapter will unpack the historical and cultural foundations that continue to influence pedagogical practices today. After setting this historical and cultural context, I will examine some of the recent attempts to reform and decolonize OAE pedagogy. While these reforms are needed, the following analysis will reveal a philosophical value gap that must be addressed if new pedagogical reforms are to succeed.

2.1 Outdoor adventure education defined

There are many multi-faceted approaches to conducting education in the out-of-doors, and it is beyond the scope of this project to address all of these. For the purposes of this research, I have chosen to focus specifically on outdoor adventure education as a context.

While several definitions for outdoor adventure education exist, I will be using the definition provided by Ewert and Sibthorp (2014),

> [Outdoor Adventure Education encompasses a] variety of teaching and learning activities and experiences usually involving a close interaction with an outdoor

natural setting and containing elements of real or perceived danger or risk in which the outcome, although uncertain, can be influenced by the actions of the participants and circumstances (5).

This definition relies on an understanding of adventure as involving an uncertain outcome and some level of danger or risk.

In the context of outdoor education more broadly, adventure education is often considered a branch of outdoor education pedagogy that focuses more on physical skills and inter/intrapersonal growth and less on ecological relationships, as illustrated in the model below (Figure 1).

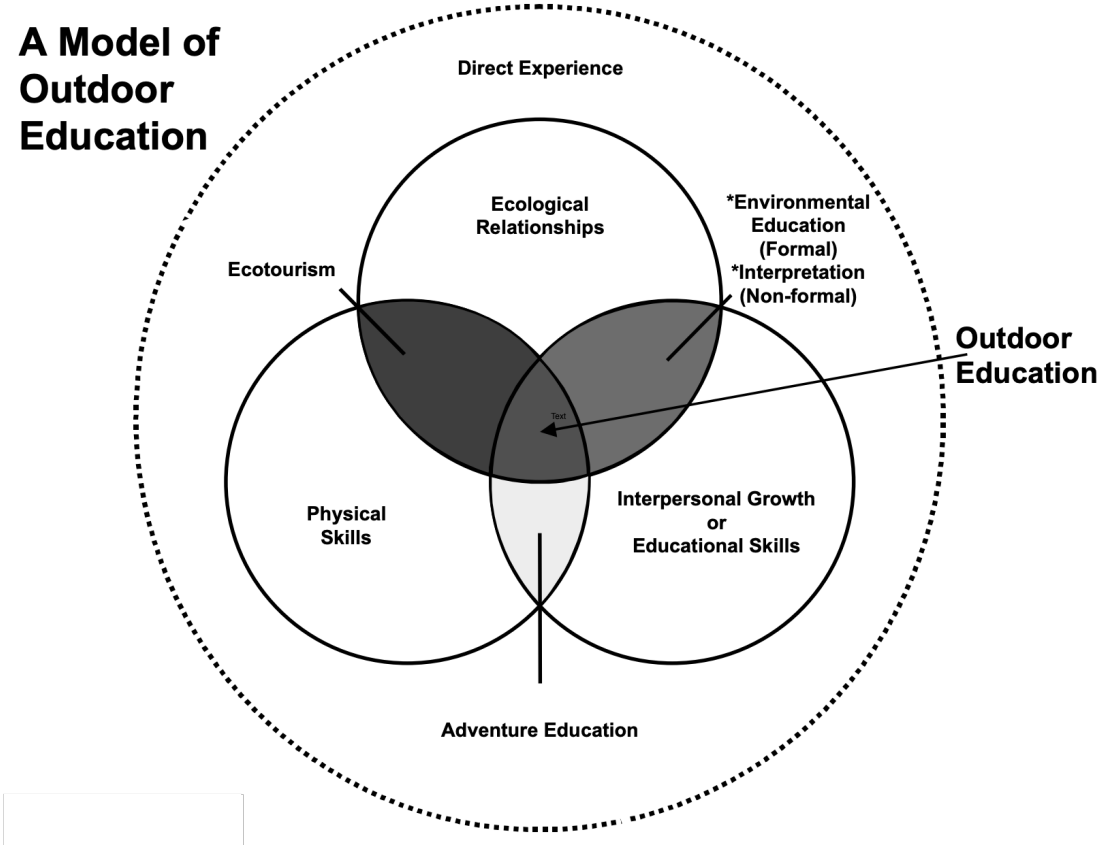

Figure 1: A model of outdoor education (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2022, p. 7)

Outdoor adventure education traditionally involves outdoor activities that require specific skills and abilities, such as backpacking, rock climbing, and paddling. As an educational endeavour, OAE focuses on personal and social development that emerges as a result of partaking in the adventurous activity. Adventure—which includes

uncertainty and risk—is chosen as a pedagogical tool to enhance these learning outcomes.

2.2 Historical & cultural context

The historical roots of combining education, the out-of-doors, and adventure vary by context and culture. In North America, origins are traditionally traced back to several sources, including The Great Age of Exploration (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2014), European Romanticism, and the influence of aesthetics and adventure tourism (Martin *et al.*, 2017). Perhaps the first programmes to intentionally utilise the outdoor environment pedagogically were Outward Bound—which followed the pedagogical aims of Salem School and Gordonstoun—and the Scouting Movement, both founded in Great Britain. Similarly, the United States saw concurrent development of non-formal education programmes that took such forms as residential summer camps, the YMCA, 4-H, and Girl/Boy Scouts (Martin *et al.*, 2017).

Many of these early programmes shared common aims in their reasoning for combining education and the out-of-doors (Macleod, 1983). Lord Robert Baden-Powell founded The Boy Scouts to address a perceived decline in the physical and moral character of modern civilisation (MacDonald, 1993). Similarly, Kurt Hahn helped create Outward Bound partly as an attempt to realise William James's challenge for a "moral equivalent to war" (James, 1911). Hahn's programmes were developed around his definition of the "five declines of modern civilization", which were understood as moral failures of society contributing to an overall lack of character (Hahn, 1960).

Both Outward Bound and the Boy Scouts were also heavily influenced by the realities of war. Baden-Powell, a British hero of the Boer War and inspired by the war-zone maturity of army scouts, recycled a manual he wrote for these British soldiers as an outdoor skills manual for young boys. Hahn, stymied by the high casualty rate of younger (presumably stronger and healthier) British castaways during World War II, concluded that these younger sailors relied too heavily on technology and lacked the experience and the craft of seamanship (Martin *et al.*, 2017). Both saw the crucible of war as a key influence in the development of character.

Additionally, most of these programmes were founded on the heels of the industrial revolution and during a dramatic increase in urbanization and changes in

wealth distribution and power. The assumption was that modernization and the progressive movement produced men who were physically, mentally, and morally weak as compared to their ancestors (Phelps, 1980; Cronon, 1996). Fuelled by a desire to reverse these damages and address the issue of moral decline, the outdoors became the new crucible—a place to test one's limits and strengthen moral values.

Taking boys[3] into the outdoors to address moral declines had its roots in both societal understandings of character and cultural constructions of nature. While others have sought to unpack the meaning and significance of character (as an example, see Stonehouse, 2012), this research project aims to look at the cultural constructions of nature and how these constructions have impacted our ontological and epistemological understandings of relationship to the more-than-human world.

2.3 The North American wilderness ideal

In the United States, the two terms most commonly used to describe the outdoor environment, particularly in the context of outdoor education, are 'wilderness' and 'nature.' In contrast to simply saying 'outdoors' or 'out-of-doors', these terms are meant to describe a *type* of outdoors—one that is 'wild' and in its 'natural' state. Many voices have endeavoured to deconstruct our modern notions of 'wilderness' and 'nature' (Nash, 1982; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Cronon, 1996; Shepard, 2002). Nash (1982) and Oelschlaeger (1991) both outline a history of how humans have understood nature, with Oelschlaeger going as far back as history will allow, and Nash focusing on the settling of the New World and the American frontier. Both recognize the role that social construction and human experience play on our understanding and interaction with the more-than-human world. The anthropocentric perspective portrayed in these works is telling. With some exceptions, 'wilderness' and 'nature' are described through a lens of causal determinism with little acknowledgement of the agency and effect of the more-than-human world.

William Cronon (1996) problematizes American constructions of wilderness in his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness." Part of the problem for Cronon lies in the masculinity that undergirds American ideals of wilderness and 'frontierism.'

[3] In the beginning, it was only boys and young men who partook in these experiences.

> The mythic frontier individualist was almost always masculine in gender: here, in the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity…. [T]he comforts and seductions of civilized life were especially insidious for men, who all too easily became emasculated by the feminizing tendencies of civilization (p. 78).

Adding to these masculine ideals were also those of privilege:

> The dream of an unworked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living—urban folk for whom food comes from a supermarket or a restaurant instead of a field, and for whom the wooden houses in which they live and work apparently have no meaningful connection to the forests in which trees grow and die. Only people whose relation to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature, for the romantic ideology of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for human beings to actually make their living from the land (p. 80).

Nash (1982) also acknowledges the role of privilege woven through the ideal of romantic wilderness: "Appreciation of wilderness began in the cities. The literary gentleman wielding a pen, not the pioneer with his axe, made the first gestures of resistance against the strong currents of antipathy" (44).

Nash further criticises the effect of American colonialism as European pioneers sought to tame the "hideous and desolate wilderness" they encountered in the New World. "For the first Americans, as for medieval Europeans, the forest's darkness hid savage men, wild beasts, and still stranger creatures of the imagination. In addition, civilized man faced the danger of succumbing to the wildness of his surroundings and reverting to savagery himself" (p. 24). These early frontiersmen were tasked with the responsibility of civilizing this new world, which meant subjugating both 'wild' human and 'wild' nature.

Cronon concludes his argument with the claim that American constructions of wilderness (rooted in masculinity, colonialism, and privilege) have created a dangerous reductionism and false dichotomy of humans outside of nature, which does more harm than good when it comes to responsibility *to* the natural world.

> This, then, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not. If this is so—if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God's natural cathedral—then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us (80).

Setting aside 'wild' land in the name of preservation might help to acknowledge its intrinsic value and right to exist apart from human influence. But it also sets up the assumption "that nature, to be natural, must also be pristine—remote from humanity and untouched by our common past" (p. 83). This assumption sets humans apart from the natural world and disregards the effects that humans have on the more-than-human (positive and negative), which we are experiencing quite poignantly through the current climate change crisis (despite our attempts to preserve pristine nature) (Rawles, 2013).

2.4 The role of nature in OAE pedagogy

Both Outward Bound and the Boy Scouts have seen little pedagogical change from their early emphasis on character development. There is still strong evidence of militaristic influences, with experiences designed to be crucibles, chiselling away the indolence of civilized life. Outward Bound's website today declares itself as "a non-profit educational organization that serves people of all ages and backgrounds through challenging learning expeditions that inspire strength of character, leadership and service to others, both in and out of the classroom" (Outward Bound, 2019). Similarly, the Boy Scouts of America endeavours "to train youth in responsible citizenship, character development, and self-reliance through participation in a wide range of outdoor activities, educational programs, and, at older age levels, career-oriented programs in partnership with community organizations" (The Boy Scouts of America, 2019). These mission statements are primarily anthropocentric, implying that the outdoor environment is simply used as a means to promote human ends.

Examining the roots of this pedagogy reveals a deeper problem, one that goes beyond Cronon's and Nash's assessments. As evidenced by Daniel's study (2010), referenced earlier, participants from OAE programmes modelled after Outward Bound and the Boy Scouts tend to view the wilderness setting of these experiences as either a 'crucible' or a 'catalyst.' The echo of a "moral equivalent to war" furthers this perception of the natural environment. A deeper look into James's vision for this moral equivalent reveals an adversarial mindset:

> If now -- and this is my idea -- there were, instead of military conscription, a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of *the army enlisted against Nature*, the injustice would tend to be evened out, and numerous other goods to the commonwealth would follow. The military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the growing fibre of the people; no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes now are blind to man's [sic] relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life... They would have paid their blood-tax, done their own part in *the immemorial human warfare against nature*; they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation (James, 1911, pp. 290–291, emphasis mine).

This being a piece of the foundation of traditional OAE programmes and curricular structure, it's difficult to fathom anything but an adversarial relationship emerging out of such experiences. At best, the natural world is a backdrop against which 'man' learns certain military ideals; at worst, the natural world is the adversary against which 'man' must pit himself in order to show himself worthy of society. In any case, I argue that this does not inspire a sense of mutualistic and reciprocal care and respect between humans and nature.

2.4.1 What about Leave No Trace?

Some researchers have argued that these organizations and others that have followed in their stead have evolved to include and recognize human relations with the natural envronment, evidenced by an emphasis on minimum impact practices and the adoption of Leave No Trace (LNT) principles (Hutson, 2012). While the development of

Leave No Trace standards has been a positive step in many respects, programmatic pedagogy has largely remained unaffected on a foundational level. The majority of programmes have tacked on LNT principles as one more set of skills necessary to survive the outdoor environment, along with pitching a tent and lighting a stove. The resulting experience remains anthropocentric—an acknowledgement of human presence in the natural environment without a full awareness of a reciprocal relationship (Alagona and Simon, 2012).

Additionally, some researchers claim that LNT principles actually do more harm than good when it comes to shifting human values and perceptions towards the more-than-human world. Andre (2012) argues that LNT principles can serve to stunt the growth of participants by teaching them "etiquette" in a particular context rather than focusing on a broader ethic that would serve to guide practices. Turner (2002) argues that the narrow focus of LNT principles to outdoor recreation does little to encourage a broader awareness of environmental impacts outside of the wilderness. Further, Loynes (2018) argues that LNT principles create more separation between humans and nature by a focus that too narrowly defines the interaction between humans and the more-than-human world, further grounding us in the problematic philosophies detailed above. Philosophically, the phrase "Leave No Trace" presents a metaphysical conundrum as it is an actual impossibility. Humans will always leave a trace, even if it's only a scent of our presence. The phrase is largely a marketing scheme to promote proper etiquette, but I argue that it reinforces the false dichotomy outlined by Cronon and does little to acknowledge reciprocity between humans and the more-than-human world.

Rather than assuming that connections happen simply by locating programming in the natural world and teaching proper outdoor etiquette, researchers and theorists are calling for a much more intentional focus on place relationships within the field of outdoor education (Gruenewald, 2003b; Martin, 2004; Wattchow, 2005; Harrison, 2010). Many outdoor education programmes are poised for such a task, and research supports the value of adding an ecological focus to programmatic elements. (Martin, 2004; Wattchow, 2005; Nicol, 2014; Mannion and Lynch, 2015; Wise *et al.*, 2022). As a result of these efforts, place-based approaches to pedagogy have emerged in an attempt to create stronger human-nature connections.

2.5 Spaces and places

One response to this need for a more ecologically focused pedagogy employs research from the field of human geography and eco-philosophy. In the 70's and 80's, researchers in these fields began to study what eventually became known as a "sense of place."

Yi-Fu Tuan, one of the founders of human geography, discusses 'place' in contrast to what is understood as 'space.' "Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning" (1979, p. 387). Tuan describes place as a concept that is both *material*[4] and *socially constructed*. While we might understand a space as an area made up of particular features—natural and human-made—a *place*, by contrast, is inextricably linked to human and non-human relationships, interactions, and meanings in the context of a specific location. While *spaces* can be objectified and distant, a *place* is intimate and connected to one's identity.

2.5.1 Sense of place

Robert Hay, an ecophilosopher, theorized these concepts into what he termed a "sense of place" (1988). Hay's sense of place differs from previous research in human geography by noting the emotive and relational attachments people develop with places. Hay suggests that, in addition to regional, behavioural, and economic investigations into place attachment, "…a holistic, empathetic, intuitive approach is also needed to understand more fully how people and place are related" (160). Hay suggests further research methods utilising ethnography and phenomenology, bridging the sciences and the humanities, may fill a gap in what had otherwise, up to this point, been studied through science and quantification.

A sense of place is, however, riddled with ontological questions. If a sense of place infers a certain kind of relationship, what is the nature of this relationship from

[4] Throughout the text of this thesis, I use the word 'material' to refer to something that is *a prior*, existing before and apart-from human construction. The word 'primary' is often used interchangeably with 'material'.

the perspective of humans, and how does this relationship contribute to the well-being and flourishing of both humans and the more-than-human world?

2.5.2 Sense of place and relational values

When we consider the idea of a *relationship* with place, we must necessarily discern what is meant by relationship, and how relationships directed towards non-humans might be conceived and understood. One approach to place relations that is evident in modern culture is the instrumental-causal relationship model. In this context, a relationship with the more-than-human world is based on its perceived instrumental value. A natural entity would have value for us due to its contribution to our own well-being. For example, we may choose to value a particular piece of land because of the abundance of food that can be cultivated in its rich soil. We care for the land knowing that if we do so, we will be able to sustain our own health and well-being through the produce that results.

Many philosophers, including environmental philosopher Simon James, contend that instrumental value infers causation; that is, a particular place or element in a place may have instrumental value for humans as a result of our causal relations with it. James states, "To have instrumental value is to make a causal contribution to bringing about a valuable state of affairs. The notion of a causal contribution is to be understood broadly. Both proximate causes and causally relevant background conditions can ground instrumental value" (James, 2019, p. 3).

James takes issue with this mode of relating to the more-than-human world, arguing that if this is the case, then it would follow that we could conceivably replace one entity with another having the same causal relation, thus resulting in the same contribution to human well-being. For instance, a tree that provides shade to my house could be removed and replaced by a human-built shade structure with no ill effects to my overall well-being (i.e. no relational damage). But, questions James, is this consistent with our experience? Can we not see evidence of emotional distress over the destruction or loss of natural habitat despite a seeming disconnect from instrumentality? What is to be said of the cultural and spiritual value of natural entities, and how do we describe numinous relationships from an instrumental-causality model?

James provides a possible response through the way we define human well-being. A *hedonic* model defines human well-being as that which gives us pleasure and satisfies desire. This approach recognizes an affective component (the presence of positive emotions) and a cognitive component (articulating something as satisfying). A contrasting approach to human well-being is the *eudaimonic* model, which defines well-being as that which connects to our values and helps us realize our full potential. The *eudaimonic* model is often described as an approach based on human flourishing.

With some clarity regarding human well-being, we could conclude that aspects of the natural world have instrumental value by contributing to human pleasure (*hedonistic* model) or to human flourishing (*eudaimonic* model). However, argues James, this again fails to acknowledge the intimacy of certain human-nature relationships. James provides an example of Katherine Smith, a 1970s Navajo activist who refused to leave her land even if she were relocated to one that provided her with more amenities and an easier life. For her, there was no substitute for the land of her origin. We see similar examples with Native Americans in northern California (Chitnis, no date). Their connection to the salmon goes far deeper than any contribution to human well-being, regardless of how that is defined. Their relationship is deeply intimate, spiritual, and intrinsically tied to the identity of the Wintu people. To destroy salmon habitat is to destroy the very soul of the Wintu, even if the government were to provide for their every need and desire.

Canadian explorer and geographer James Raffan has also been interested in human attachments to place that extend beyond an instrumental model. In his research regarding "Land as Teacher," Raffan explores the types of connections that people establish with certain places over a long period of time (1993). Specifically, locating his research in the Thelon Game Sanctuary of the Northwest Territories of Canada, Raffan discusses land conflicts in this particular area. He asserts that the conflicts aren't necessarily fights about land use but are ultimately disagreements about what land *means*. He distinguishes between our perceptions of land as commodity, recreation, peaceful haven, energy potential, and part of a God-given (i.e. transcendent) universe. Through his ethnographic research, he identified four different types of a "sense of place" based in meanings: toponymic, narrative, experiential, and numinous.

Toponymic connections have to do with things like place names, indicating both knowledge of and attachment to a certain place. Narrative connections were evident through the stories embedded in the culture regarding how the land came to be, the history of the land, and even gossip about events that occurred over the years.

An experiential connection is different than toponymic or narrative in that it is a first-hand encounter with a particular place. Within the experiential connection, Raffan notes a distinct difference between the experiences of those who were dependent upon the land for survival (hunters, trappers, and the like) and those who experienced the land for more leisurely reasons (a canoe trip). Those who were dependent upon the land were able to recall attributes of the land in much more detail (wind direction, flow of water, etc).

The last connection identified by Raffan's research is that of the numinous. "Numinous connections to place are all that is awe-inspiring, all that transcends the rational, all that touches the heart more than the mind, all that goes beyond names, stories, and experience and yet still plays a significant role in the bond that links people and place" (1993, p. 44) Raffan concludes his article by contending that these types of a sense of place, as understood through meaning rather than instrumentality, are intimately associated with identity. "…Because it appears that sense of place, in varying degrees, constitutes an existential definition of self. For many consultants to this study, you take away the land or break the connection to land, you prevent them from being who they are" (1993, p. 45).

2.6 Place-responsive pedagogies

These ideas from human geography and ecophilosophy have inspired some outdoor educators to adopt a "sense of place" pedagogy, also referred to as place-based learning or place-responsive approaches, with the hope of inspiring meaningful relationships between participants and the natural world (Wattchow and Brown, 2011; Jickling, Blenkinsop, Morse, *et al.*, 2018). Place-based learning is attractive to outdoor adventure educators who desire a more substantive approach to how we relate to the natural world. Moving beyond the concept that understands place as a crucible that helps humans discover their true nature, place becomes central to the learning

experience as a fellow pedagogue, where place also instructs alongside human instructors.

The importance of place in education is underscored by Gruenewald (2003a). He argues that "a multidisciplinary analysis of place reveals the many ways that places are profoundly pedagogical. That is, as centres of experience, places *teach* us about how the world works and how our lives fit into the spaces we occupy. Further, places *make* us: As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped" (621, emphasis in original). It stands to reason, then, that the places in which we choose to locate programming can have a profound impact on the pedagogical outcomes of an experience and in who participants become as a result.

As one example, Harrison (2010) addresses what he deems a lack of meaningful engagement with place in outdoor environmental education within the UK. Harrison begins by exploring the ontology and epistemology of current pedagogical approaches within the UK as they relate to human connections with particular places. With an initial look to deep ecology for possible answers, Harrison notes his dissatisfaction with this field in addressing questions related to the nature of human relationships with specific places. "[D]eep ecology doesn't provide illumination on the process or concepts which might enable environmental education to engage with a bothy in the middle of the west highlands of Scotland, or any other specific location" (p. 4).

Harrison is equally dissatisfied with ecopsychology's ability to address the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human world.

> Yet, while these authors maintain the eco-psychological idea of healthy relationships between people and places (Conn, 1995, p. 163), what is the nature of this connection? What relationship have 'my' group really got with *this* bothy, *this* glen?... The questions of time and breadth of relationship with place are not dealt with in the majority of the eco-psychological literature (pp. 4-5, emphasis in the original).

Harrison turns to place-based pedagogical approaches as a possible answer. After an exploration of place-based literature from the United States, Canada, and Australia, Harrison indicates that place-based approaches usually consists of:

- a series of visits to one locality;

- a diverse, and increasingly participant-directed, experiential approach to understanding the place—through ecology, cultural history, geology, geography, place-names, story, interactions with local community, work projects and more. This results in a variety of ways of recording and linking these experiences to wider issues—discussions, journals, artwork. Building up a body of work to which participants and community members contribute; and
- an action research approach, where students direct and shape their own learning, contributing to the place in various immediate or long-term ways (7).

Throughout this exploration, Harrison is interested in determining "what promotes a sense of place" (p. 10) and how outdoor environmental education might be poised for greater place-responsiveness.

Given the goals of place-based education, there are problems that need to be addressed in current pedagogical practice. One problem identified by Harrison is that most outdoor education experiences occur in places where the participants don't live. While this may not negate the goals of place-responsiveness, there needs to be more focus on connecting place-responsive practices for 'away' and 'home.'

Harrison concludes by calling for more research that acknowledges and includes ontological and epistemological frameworks of 'place' and 'relationship.' The goal of this research would be to draw connections between learning about places with living well in them. While he does not suggest a particular methodology, a less traditional method seems a likely choice given the conventions being challenged.

Autoethnography is beneficial as a methodology in that it allows the researcher to explore place relations reflexively while simultaneously considering the underlying onto-epistemological assumptions.

2.6.1 Wild pedagogies

Newer to the scene is the concept of wild pedagogies (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Morse, *et al.*, 2018). This pedagogical approach began gaining traction in 2014 and has been developed primarily by educators in Canada, the UK, Europe, and Australia. Rather than simply becoming another methodological approach under the umbrella of

experiential education, wild pedagogues have sought to unravel the anthropocentric foundations of education and to invite the more-than-human world as a partner in the learning process. The proponents of wild pedagogies, who call themselves a collective, advocate for addressing current unsustainable human relationships with the natural world through the transformation of educational practices. As noted on the *wild pedagogies* website, "It will not be enough to simply reform existing educational institutions, it is suggested that they must be re-wilded" (Kazi, 2023b).

The plural use of the word pedagogy is intentional by the founders of this educational paradigm. Consistent with their critique of approaches to education that are perceived as too formulaic, wild pedagogues aim to leave the door open to many different pedagogies. This requires a bit of structure to determine what, in fact, qualifies a pedagogy to be considered a wild pedagogy. The proponents of this approach outline six "touchstones" that characterize wild pedagogies: 1) nature as co-teacher; 2) complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity; 3) locating the wild; 4) time and practice; 5) socio-cultural change; and 6) building alliances and the human community (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, *et al.*, 2018). These touchstones are meant to be iterative and evolving and are denoted by the authors as a work in progress. Taken together, they are meant to encourage a recognition of the more-than-human world, our place within it in terms of belonging and humility, and a willingness to allow the natural world to take an active part in our educational ventures.

There is also intentionality with the use of the word 'wild.' Acknowledging the problematic colonial constructs that come with the term 'wilderness' (as similarly outlined in my summary above), members of the collective have advocated for a reclamation of the wild rather than an abandonment of the term (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, *et al.*, 2018). For them, wilderness is more than just a cultural construct. "Engaging with wilderness in wild pedagogies is intended to cultivate an ability to recognize the significance of the real—material—places and the freedoms of all life to flourish, human and other-than-human" (2018, p. 29). Wild pedagogues are intentional in recognizing the wild as material, acknowledging the autonomy and agency of the more-than-human world.

Wild pedagogies provides a promising pedagogical turn, particularly as it relates to the recognition of the agency of the more-than-human world. However, on a

philosophical level, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between 'reforming' and 'rewilding' education. Both phrases address educational practice, which certainly needs reform. But the work may be deeper still than wild pedagogues suggest.

2.6.2 Rewilding education

A parallel movement in Britain is called Rewilding Education. An extension of the conservation movement which advocates for allowing the natural world to heal itself, these pedagogues advocate for a similar type of restoration of children. Their website describes it this way:

> Rewilding education is not about learning how to rewild ecosystems although it is informed by the concept…. As human beings are an intrinsic and interdependent part of the living world it appears that people can also benefit from the process of rewilding, that is from the process of being brought into closer contact with their own innate spontaneity, self-will and personal authority [sic]. Education needs rewilding. This means acknowledging the damage that has been done to children and young people and proactively finding ways to help everyone to flourish (*Rewilding education*, no date).

These new approaches to place-responsive pedagogy certainly have merits. They are built upon a recognition of our broken relationship with the natural world and an acknowledgement that humans are part of the natural world. This acknowledgement of our metaphysical condition invites an epistemological response in the form of an invitation for the more-than-human world to become an active participant in the educational process. This is an intentional movement away from the concept of nature as adversary and a welcomed approach that invites connection rather than alienation.

2.7 A philosophy – pedagogy value gap

The preceding text outlines the ways in which OAE pedagogy evolved out of a perception of declines in human morality and an attempt to address these through an adversarial relationship with the natural world. Research from the fields of ecophilosophy and human geography have helped to define 'place' and the influence meanings have over how places are valued, and pedagogues have begun to address the role of place and suggest methodology that acknowledges place within OAE. However,

there is still work to be done. The exploration above reveals a value gap within OAE. Philosophically, OAE pedagogy is still being guided by the onto-epistemological assumptions that fuelled colonialism and the Romantic movement, particularly as it relates to our notions of what is natural and the places we choose to value (e.g. 'wilderness' and places that don't include humans). These assumptions are based in anthropocentrism, a hierarchical view of relationships, and a substance-based ontology (discussed in more detail in chapter 5). In addition, there remain problematic divides between subject and object that pervade pedagogical practices and human relationships with place. This impacts the ways in which we understand experience and how we construct knowledge that emerges from our experiences.

Pedagogues have begun to recognize that our learning outcomes within OAE can (and should) go beyond human-centric benefits to include a relational connection with the natural world. Place-based education, wild pedagogies, and rewilding education movements have sought to address the relational dimensions of humans and the more-than-human world. However, the nature of these relational dimensions has not been well defined, nor has there been an attempt to construct new onto-epistemological structures that are more place-inclusive.

2.8 Summary

This section has summarized the historical and sociological context that has influenced the emergence of OAE and the connections between pedagogy and the outdoors, revealing problematic sociocultural constructs rooted in colonialism, masculinity, and privilege along with a false dichotomy between humans and place. New methods in OAE have sought to address these influences and highlight the role of place in pedagogy, but there is still a need to reconstruct the philosophical underpinnings of OAE pedagogy. The next section will explore the philosophical landscape of place relations through the philosophy of Marin Buber, experiences of the sublime, and relational ontology.

Part 2: The Philosophical Landscape

> *Plumbing and philosophy are both activities that arise because elaborate cultures like ours have, beneath their surface, a fairly complex system which is usually unnoticed, but which sometimes goes wrong. In both cases, this can have serious consequences. Each system supplies vital needs for those who live above it. Each is hard to repair when it does go wrong, because neither of them was ever consciously planned as a whole. There have been many ambitious attempts to reshape both of them, but existing complications are usually too widespread to allow a completely new start (Midgley, 1992, p. 139).*

This section comprises phase two of the research, which was conducted through a desk study and sought to address the questions: 1) "How do we conceive of the primacy of human-nature relations?" and 2) "How do we understand human relations with the more-than-human world in ways that are not instrumental or causal in nature?" Chapter 3 explores Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, suggesting the concept of an I-You encounter as a way to conceive of human-nature relations that are primary and non-instrumental. Chapter 4 provides a philosophical survey of experiences of the natural sublime, unpacking the phenomenological features that comprise a sublime experience. These phenomena are then considered from a ontological lens of relationality arising from indigenous scholars, which is explored in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: From Experience to Encounter

An exploration into the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human world is both ontological and phenomenological. Ontology explores the nature of reality, whereas phenomenology studies the nature of human perception and experience. My exploration of this topic begins with phenomenology, and in this chapter I explore the idea of a *quality* of relationship through the work of Martin Buber.

Buber was an Austrian-born Jewish philosopher, living during the late 19th & early 20th centuries. Though Buber wrote extensively throughout his life, he is perhaps best known for his book *I and Thou* (*Ich and Du* in German). A small, seemingly unimposing book, its depth and complexity quickly overwhelm the reader. Perhaps due to the influence Nietzsche and Kierkegaard had on his own intellectual work, Buber's writing style is almost poetic, full of aphorisms (Ravenscroft, 2017). As the English translator of the 1970 edition notes, "The style of *Ich and Du* is anything but sparse and pretentious, lean or economical. It represents a late flowering of romanticism and tends to blur all contours in the twilight of suggestive but extremely unclear language" (Kaufmann, 1970, p. 24).

Perhaps one explanation for the style of writing is that Buber was trying to communicate a concept that could not be communicated with rational argumentation (or even with the language of his day). So, rather than painstakingly crafting an argument, he instead attempts to paint a picture with words. And the picture he paints might be understood as an authentic relationship, or *encounter*. Buber later referred to this as his philosophy of dialogue.

It is important to acknowledge that the original text published in 1923 was written in German. There are two English translations in circulation, the first published in 1937 (Smith, R. G.), with a 2nd edition published in 1958 and re-published as a Scribner Classic in 2000. The most recent translation was published in 1970 (Buber, 1970). For the English language reader, translation naturally creates an additional layer of interpretation. Kaufmann's 1970 translation has extensive footnotes referencing the original German and includes a lengthy preface written by Kaufmann. Additionally, Kaufmann was close to Buber, having studied under him at the rabbinical academy during World War II (Pickus, 2011). He was also often critical of Buber's ideas,

something I will explore later. Still, Kaufmann's translation attempts to interpret the true meaning of Buber's original text—a formidable goal as Buber himself often claimed to be unsure of his own meaning (Kaufmann, 1970).

> On the very first page Buber lays out the thesis of his book:
>
> The world is twofold for man[5] in accordance with his twofold attitude.
>
> The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.
>
> The basic words are not single words, but word pairs.
>
> One basic word is the word pair I-You.[6]
>
> The other basic word pair is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It.
>
> Thus the I of man is also twofold.
>
> For the I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It (Buber, 1970, p. 53).

Here Buber introduces two different ways that humans relate to the world—that of I-It and that of I-You. In clarifying "the world," Buber delineates what he calls three "spheres" of relationship: human to the natural world, human to human, and human to spiritual beings. He does not spend energy on defining these three spheres in detail but allows the nature of each to unfold as he continues to paint for us a picture of *encounter.*

What Buber is describing is a particular way of relating—both interacting with and conceiving of—an entity outside of oneself. This way of relating affects not only the way we see the other—the 'It' or the 'You'—but also the way we see ourselves. As we will see later, the 'I' of the I-It relationship is often self-conscious, insecure, fearful, and/or arrogant. By contrast, the 'I' of the I-You relationship is content, confidently humble, and whole. With these two-word pairs, Buber attempts to draw attention to the phenomena of relationship. The object/subject of the encounter can be the same

---

[5] Buber's writing uses the noun 'man' exclusively when referring to humans, as was acceptable in his day. While I will retain this language in direct quotations from his work, in my own analysis I will be using 'human' and/or interchanging masculine & feminine pronouns to represent all expressions of gender.

[6] While the title of this version of the book is translated from the German *Ich and Du* into the English rendering *I and Thou* (to maintain consistency with earlier English translations), throughout Kaufmann's translation he uses the terminology of I-You instead of I-Thou. I will be following Kaufmann's example.

for both 'It' and 'You;' what differentiates between the two is the phenomena of relationship—the encounter that occurs in the space *between* 'I' and 'It/You.'

Some critics have accused Buber of setting up polarities and encouraging dualistic thinking and false dilemmas (Ravenscroft, 2017). Kaufmann, for instance, in the preface to his translation of Buber's work, claims that the human world is "manifold" instead of Buber's "twofold" (Kaufmann, 1970). According to Kaufmann, we not only have the two "I-It" and "I-You," but also "I-I, I-It, It-It, We-We, and Us-Them" (1970, p. 14).

I will discuss this in more detail later. For now it is worth acknowledging that perhaps Buber's purpose in setting up these two opposing ideas was to seek clarity of a phenomenon by highlighting both *what it is* and *what it is not.* As mentioned previously, Buber was attempting to describe something perceived but difficult to articulate or define. It is my impression that he used every other means available to him, and in this case his intention was not to set up a duality, but to set up a *nonduality*.

As such, while more time will be spent looking at the I-You mode of relating, I will first discuss Buber's description of the I-It mode of relating.

3.1 The I-It mode of relating

The I-It mode of relating might be compared to the desire to cognitively understand something or someone. It is consistent throughout the book that the pronoun 'It' can be substituted for any number of pronouns: he, she, they, etc. In other words, the word 'It' should not be presumed to mean something other-than-human. Additionally, 'It' can refer to any of the three spheres that Buber outlines in the opening pages: humans, members of the more-than-human world, or spiritual beings.

Buber illustrates the I-It mode of relating first by using the example of a tree:

> I contemplate a tree.
>
> I can accept it as a picture: a rigid pillar in a flood of light, or splashes of green traversed by the gentleness of the blue silver ground.
>
> I can feel it as movement: the flowing veins around the sturdy, striving core, the sucking of the roots, the breathing of the leaves, the infinite commerce with earth and air—and the growing itself in its darkness.
>
> I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance, with an eye to its

construction and its way of life.

I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I recognize it only as an expression of the law—those laws according to which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or those laws according to which the elements mix and separate.

I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and eternalize it.

Throughout all of this the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span, its kind and condition (1970, p. 58).

Here Buber describes a way of relating to something where 'I' am the subject and the tree is my object. Contemplating the tree can take different forms—aesthetic appreciation ("accept it as a picture"), sensuality ("feel it as a movement"), classification ("assign it to a species"), correspondence with natural law ("recognize it only as an expression of the law"), mathematical calculation ("dissolve it into a number"). What is important here is not what form I use when contemplating the tree. What Buber is trying to illustrate comes in his final statement: "…the tree remains my object and has its place and its time span…" These forms of contemplation are objective/material in that they are one-way. My way of relating to another in the I-It mode is focused on utility, on what I will do with that which confronts me. It does not consider how the 'I' might be changed by the other, nor does it consider that this interaction with the tree might live beyond the immediate direct experience of contemplation.

Buber's mention of place and time in this excerpt illustrates the influence of Kant on his understanding of the phenomena of perception. Buber subscribed to Kant's notion that space and time are pure forms of perception, that they exist in how we experience a thing (phenomena) as opposed to being inherent in the thing itself (noumena) (Biser, 1963). In the I-It mode of relating, my perceiving of the other does not invite me to share in the other's space and time. Instead, I perceive that the other resides in its own sense of space and time, and I reside in mine. There is a separation here, and this will become important as I-It is contrasted with I-You.

The 'I' in the I-It mode of relating is interacting anthropocentrically. From Buber: "The I of the basic word I-It appears as an ego and becomes conscious of itself as

a subject (of experience and use)" (1970, pp. 111–112). The word translated by Kaufmann as 'ego' comes from the German *Eigenwesen*, described by Kaufmann as a very unusual German word at the time. What Buber was after here, according to Kaufmann and also to Buber's own notes on the first English edition of his work, is "man's relation to himself" (Buber, 1970, footnotes 111-112). In other words, in the I-It mode of relating, though a human may be thinking about the other, her true focus is on herself in light of the other—how she might learn from the other, use the other, appreciate the other, etc. The relationship here is anthropocentric and instrumental.

3.2 The phenomenon of experience

There are similarities between the German semantics Buber uses as compared to that of outdoor adventure education. The idea of a 'lived experience' is often touted in outdoor education as the ultimate aim of pedagogy. Experiential education has become both a pedagogical framework and a philosophical foundation for what outdoor adventure educators are hoping to achieve (Roberts, 2012). In this context, Buber's use of the word *experience* as it relates to relationship becomes more intriguing. In German, there are two words that are translated into English as experience. The first, *Erfahrung*, is the more traditional word for experience and refers to more reflective and collective experiences that one may gain over time. The second word, *Erlebnis*, contains the root *leben*, meaning life, and thus often gets translated as *lived* experience. Martin Jay discusses these and provides this perspective on *Erfahrung*:

> [I]t came to mean a more temporarily elongated notion of experience based on a learning process, an integration of discrete moments of experience into a narrative whole or an adventure. This latter view, which is sometimes called a dialectical notion of experience, connotes a progressive, if not always smooth, movement over time, which is implied by the *Fahr* (journey) embedded in the *Erfahrung* and the linkage with the German word for danger (*Gefahr*). As such, it activates a link between memory and experience, which subtends the belief that cumulative experience can produce a kind of wisdom that comes only at the end of the day (as quoted in Roberts, 2012, p. 22).

Interestingly, Buber's use of the word *Erfahrung* seems to indicate a shallow interaction between humans and the world around them.

> We are told that man *experiences* his world. What does this mean? *Man goes over the surfaces of things and experiences them*. He brings back from them some knowledge of their condition—as *experience*. He *experiences* what there is to things. But it is not *experiences* alone that bring the world to man (1970, p. 55, emphasis mine).

According to Kaufmann, Buber is making a play on words here in German. *Erfahrung* contains the German word *fahren*, which means to drive or to go. As noted by Jay above, this is often associated with the idea that experience carries with it the notion of a journey. However, the sentence translated by Kaufmann uses the verb *befahren*, which means "to drive over the surface of something." Thus, Buber seems to be pointing out the connection between these two words in German. As Kaufmann notes, "Buber manages to suggest that experience stays on the surface" (1970, p. 55, footnotes).

Buber places experiences, including lived experiences, in the realm of the I-It. In doing this, he is not so much focusing on the factors involved in the experience (conditions, environment, people, etc.), but on the *quality*, or mode, of human relationship to these factors. *Experience*, for Buber, is anthropocentric.

Given Buber's choice of wording, in this chapter I will be using the term 'experience' to refer to Buber's notion of an I-It mode of relating. In doing this, the word 'experience' becomes problematized (as we will see). The problem does not, however, stem from the word itself but from the underlying ontological implications of the I-It modes of relating that are inherent in experiences.

This brief overview of the I-It relationship, along with the phenomenon of experience, will allow us a more in-depth look into the significance of I-You and the phenomenon of encounter. While Buber spends much of his book discussing I-You in terms of human-human relationships, he makes it clear that this way of relating applies to three different 'spheres' of human existence: life with nature, life with other humans, and life with spiritual beings (1970, pp. 55–56). I-You, then, also applies to human relationships with the more-than-human world. This sphere of relating will be the focus of the following discourse.

3.3 The I-You mode of relating

As already mentioned, the first example of the different modes of relating that Buber offers is of a human contemplating a tree. In the last section I described the beginning of this example as a form of I-It. The example continues to unfold from where I left it, contrasting I-It with what Buber considers to be an I-You mode of relating. Picking up where I left off, Buber states,

> But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It. The power of exclusiveness has seized me.
>
> This does not require me to forego any of the modes of contemplation. There is nothing that I must not see in order to see, and there is no knowledge that I must forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and instance, law and number, included and inseparably fused.
>
> Whatever belongs to the tree is included: its form and its mechanics, its colors and its chemistry, its conversation with the elements and its conversation with the stars—all this in its entirety.
>
> The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of a mood; it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it—only differently.
>
> One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity (1970, p. 58).

Here we see two different themes emerge. The first, explicitly stated, is the concept of *holism*. In the reductionist thinking of his day, Buber advocates for thinking holistically and contextually about the other. The tree, in his example, is not the sum of its parts. As the 'I' begins to see the tree in this holistic way—recognizing its place in the present environment and at the present moment, "it confronts me bodily…." This is an odd statement, even in German (1970, p. 58, note 1). Throughout the book, Buber uses the word *gegenüber*, which Kaufmann translates here as 'confront.' Literally the word means "that which is over against" (Kaufmann, 1970, p. 45). Other versions of the word, *begegnung* (noun) and *begegnen* (verb) are translated by Kaufmann as 'encounter.' This word and its variations are used by Buber specifically in reference to I-You modes of

relating.[7]

Different than 'experience,' which, as discussed earlier, Buber argues as being anthropocentric, 'encounter' suggests a reciprocal relationship, one that recognizes the essence of the 'other' and allows for mutual transformation. This is the second element that is stated explicitly in the above example (and explored in more detail below).

Reciprocity is a theme that is revisited throughout the book. Part of reciprocity is a connection between encounter and embodiment, "…it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it—only differently." The relationship that exists within an encounter is reciprocal. Whereas in the I-It mode of relating there is a separation in our perception of space and time—we perceive the other as having its own space and time apart from ours—an encounter means that the 'I' must confront 'You', in which the 'I' and 'You' enter the same space and time and must acknowledge one another bodily.

What Buber seems to be getting at here is that something unique occurs in the space between the I and the You (in this case, the tree). The tree is now a subject (You) rather than an object (It), and there is an embodied encounter that transforms both the 'I' and the 'You.' Rather than conceptualizing myself as being 'near' the tree or thinking 'of' the tree, encounter opens myself up to 'be with' and 'think with' the tree, sharing the same space and time.

3.4 The phenomenon of encounter

Kaufmann's translation utilizes the word 'encounter' for the German *Beziehungserlebnis*, which literally means "living experience of relation." While Buber does not specifically define what he means by this phrasing, the text provides insights that help unpack his intention. Throughout the text Buber seems to indicate that encounter is inherently material and ontologically primary.

The material nature of I-You encounters is intertwined in the text. In one example, Buber states, "The You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking" followed by:

[7] I will be using the word 'encounter' throughout this thesis as synonymous with the I-You mode of relating.

> The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur [sic] (1970, pp. 62–63).

Here Buber is describing a phenomenon that is authentic and material in nature, unmediated and unexpected. The You takes the I by surprise; encounter is not sought after but is something that happens as an undeserved gift. It is not a constructed experience, and in fact, constructions are described as obstacles to the authenticity of the encounter. We also see again Buber's reference to metaphysical holism: "memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness."

The I-You encounter is also free from the intervention of purpose. Later, Buber reinforces this by contrasting the reciprocal nature of an encounter with the causality of an experience:

> The unlimited sway of causality in the It-world, which is of fundamental importance for the scientific ordering of nature, is not felt to be oppressive by the man who is not confined to the It-world but free to step out of it again and again into the world of relation. Here I and You confront each other freely in a reciprocity that is not involved in or tainted by any causality; here man finds guaranteed the freedom of his being and of being (1970, p. 100).

An encounter is also something that is temporary, as it requires being wholly immersed in the present. The You of the I-You encounter eventually becomes an It; as Buber says, encounters, or "pure presence," would "consume us" (1970, pp. 84-85).

Inherent in the concept of encounter is reciprocity. Buber referred to the I-You encounter as a dialogue—a two-way conversation. The reciprocity that exists in the encounter is grace, a gift, one that leads to love and a sense of responsibility (1970, pp. 66-67). The encounter evokes feelings of mutual respect, love, and compassion. Here we see connections to virtue ethics, specifically an ethic of care, which will be discussed in more detail later.

3.5 Reciprocal equality and alterity

Unique to Buber's philosophy is the equivalency he affords to both human and non-human subjects (Blenkinsop and Scott, 2017). The interchangeability of the subject of 'You' means that all I-You encounters share the same level of significance—an encounter is possible regardless of whether the subject of 'You' is human or non-human. Buber provides personal examples of encounters with animals, vegetation, and even minerals (Blenkinsop, 2005).

As discussed by Blenkinsop & Scott (2017), Buber scholarship has evolved around this topic. Early Buber scholars regarded Buber's discussion of encounters with subjects in the more-than-human world to be too mystical and romantic. Blenkinsop & Scott provide an example from Donald Berry,

> Many readers find the concern with nature so to border on magic or mysticism that they think it can appropriately be ignored. Although it might not seriously disqualify Buber's invitation to reciprocity, they regard the call to "consider a tree" as a curious idiosyncrasy or an embarrassing romantic whimsy. Thus the connection of Buber's vision of mutuality to the natural, to the tree, has remained unidentified and undeveloped, or forgotten altogether (as quoted in Blenkinsop and Scott, 2017, p. 454).

Later Buber scholars more readily acknowledge an equality in the reciprocal nature of encounters with both human and non-human subjects, which does not depend on a certain response from the 'You.' With some debate as to whether an encounter with a non-human entity leads to anthropomorphizing, there are scholars who maintain that Buber's philosophy allows for the unique alterity of the 'other,' and this in fact is a key aspect of Buber's philosophy of dialogue (Blenkinsop and Scott, 2017). Importantly, Buber also emphasized that an I-You encounter does not diminish the unique identity of either subject—each maintains their sense of alterity and consciousness which is in contrast to certain eastern religions (Buber, 1970).

3.6 Encounter as relational ontology

While Buber does not claim any particular metaphysics (and in fact sees metaphysics as often being in the way of exploring what is "fundamental"), he does

claim an ontology (Wood, 1969). *I and Thou* is a seminal work in that it captures the essence of his earlier thoughts as well as what came after, and at its core it is a work of ontology. While Buber was an existentialist, he was distinct in his emphasis upon the interplay between entities, drawing specific attention to this 'between-ness.' As discussed by Wood, "Martin Buber introduced the notion of an ontologically prior relation of *Presence*, binding subject and object together in an identity-in-difference which he termed the I-Thou relation and which constitutes the region of what he calls the Between (*das Zwischen*)" (1969, p. xii empahsis in the orignial).

Buber makes it clear in his work that, while the phenomenon of relation—similar to that of space and time—is conceived of in the mind (Wood, 1969), the primacy of all things is found in relation. The relation comes before, is there before we are aware of it, and has the potential to be experienced phenomenologically through an I-You encounter.

> …[T]he longing for relation is primary, the cupped hand into which the being that confronts us nestles; and the relation to that, which is a wordless anticipation of saying You, comes second…. In the beginning is the relation—as the category of being, as readiness, as a form that reaches out to be filled, as a model of the soul; the *a priori* of relation; *the innate You.* In the relationships through which we live, the innate You is realized in the You we encounter: that this, comprehended as a being we confront[8] and accepted as exclusive, can finally be addressed with the basic word, has its ground in the *a priori* of relation (1970, pp. 78-79, empahsis in the original).

Here Buber introduces the concept of "The innate You," translated elsewhere as "the inborn Thou" (Buber, 1937). Underlying this concept is the Hasidic notion of Shekinah, the idea of divine indwelling. Buber states elsewhere that "nothing can exist without a divine spark."(Buber, 1958, p. 49) This 'spark,' or Shekinah, can be found in all parts of the natural world. An I-You encounter involves discovering the Shekinah in the other, calling it out, and finding connection (Blenkinsop, 2005). This is not something that can be forced, but is entered into as a sort of dialogue—one that recognizes the wholeness of the other while being wholly present to self (1970, p. 58). Additionally,

[8] The German here for 'confront' is similar to what is translated elsewhere as 'encounter.'

the encounter itself is not a feeling, though it can be accompanied by feelings (1970, p. 66). Rather, it is a recognition of and longing for *presence*, which is primary.

It's relevant to highlight a key feature of encounter, namely that the 'I' retains her sense of self-consciousness. Being aware of the 'You' does not imply there is a lack of awareness of the 'I'. This will become an important distinction when we consider the phenomenon of sublime experiences in the next chapter.

While the idea of 'the innate You' might feel familiar to deep ecologists, there is a difference in the recognition of the uniqueness of the other. Shekinah does not negate or deny alterity. Rather, Shekinah opens the door to encounter while acknowledging and celebrating otherness. An encounter involves embracing the other through dialogue without giving up yourself (Buber, 1970, p. 141). This erases dualities and recognizes that 'othering' the You does not mean separating the I from the You.

Some scholars seem reticent to make the leap and claim Buber's philosophy as being rooted in a relational ontology. This is evident partly due to the lack of research that connects Buber's work to relational ontology. In my literature review, only Robert Wood dedicated space to unpacking Buber's ontological position. His analysis, however, is hesitant to identify Buber as a relational ontologist (Wood, 1969).

The long history of substance-based ontology in the western world makes us reluctant to consider a different way of conceptualizing that which is ontologically primary, and philosophers have struggled to define *relations* in a way that accounts for the myriad of relations that exist—in physics, math, cognitive science, religion, etc. (Wildman, 2010). While Buber's philosophy of dialogue does not solve these complex issues, it does present a way to conceive of the differing qualities of relations. Chiefly, there is a distinct difference between an I-It relation and an I-You relation. For Buber, the latter is primary, the former derivative. Buber recognizes that not all relations are created equal, and the *a priori* relation of encounter is unique in its reciprocal and transformative nature. While the I-You relation exists foundationally, it remains an uncommon occurrence and requires a willingness to be fully present to the relation, to briefly extend a notion of self to include the other while acknowledging the alterity of both self and other. An I-You encounter is, by its very nature, transcendental and transformational. By contrast, an I-It relation is transactional. The 'I' of the I-It experience is not changed and sees the other through a lens of causality.

3.7 I-You encounters and an ethic of care

One of the unique aspects of Buber's philosophy of dialogue is the call to action, which is discussed in the third section of the book (aptly titled "Third Part"). For Buber, an I-You encounter results in what he calls a "presence of strength," which affirms a meaning to life that is demonstrated through us and requires action. A true encounter results in love, a love that requires action: "Love is responsibility of an I for a You" (1970, p. 66). While Buber doesn't delve very far into ethics, he makes references throughout the book to reciprocity, that there is both a give and a take inherent in every encounter.

There also exists a *both-and* nature to Buber's discussion of encounter. An I-You relation requires the I to be wholly present to the You, but Buber makes it clear that the 'I' still maintains her unique identity and does not lose herself in the chasm of 'You', which "has no borders" (Buber, 1970, p. 55). The 'I' maintains consciousness in a way that allows her to acknowledge the uniqueness of the 'You'. In this, she receives a gift of meaning—a sense of knowing the other that makes the 'between' pregnant with the fullness of life.

3.8 Summary

The analysis of Buber's work in this chapter offers a way forward in attempts to qualify the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human world. While there are likely many other phenomena at play, Buber's work comparing-and-contrasting these two modes of relating provides a framework upon which to build. Features of Buber's framework include a focus on metaphysical holism, relational reciprocity, a relationship that has meanings outside of instrumentation, a sense of transcendence, and a resulting call to responsibility born out of love and compassion. In addition, one uniqueness to Buber's notion of encounter is the interplay between self-consciousness and alterity and the recognition that these two features don't negate themselves in the face of metaphysical holism.

There are a surprising number of similarities between Buber's notion of an I-You encounter and phenomenological accounts of sublime experiences, which is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Experiences of the Sublime in Nature

This chapter considers experiences of the sublime in nature, exploring the phenomenology of these experiences as discussed in philosophical literature and the literature of the Romantics. First I will explore the concept of the sublime broadly from historical and modern philosophical literature, followed by descriptions of sublime experiences from Romantic literature, thus establishing a context for the sublime in environmental aesthetics, morality, and ethics. Then I will unpack the ways in which experiences of the sublime are connected to Martin Buber's I-You encounters and OAE pedagogy. Finally, I argue for a reclamation of the sublime by recognizing its material nature and viewing it through a lens of relational ontology. Throughout the chapter, I argue for the ways in which experiences of the sublime actively subsume the experience of relationality into a subjective phenomenon.

4.1 Definitions and context

Sublime is not a word that gets much use in modern-day English. Much more common are words that are often used as synonyms for sublime: awe, wonder, and/or grandeur. These words, however, fail to fully capture the phenomenological complexity of a sublime experience.

Robert Clewis, while acknowledging that the meaning of sublime is elusive, defines it as "a complex feeling of intense satisfaction, uplift, or elevation, felt before an object or event that is considered awe-inspiring" (2019a, p. 1). Immanuel Kant describes it this way: "That is sublime which even to be able to think of demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses" (as quoted in Brady, 2013, p. 70). Emily Brady offers the following definition, "When the term is attributed to things, it can mean that the thing in question is high or lofty, but it can also mean that the response to certain properties in objects involves a feeling of being elevated or uplifted. The sublime thus involves a *relation* between the sublime thing and a particular aesthetic experience (or response) in the subject" (2013, p. 4, emphasis mine).

Brady (2013) suggests that the environmental sublime has been outmoded in

modern rhetoric due to three primary factors. The first suggests that the real and perceived 'taming' of wild places simply doesn't afford us with the kinds of sublime experiences we used to have, or that we have simply lost our 'taste' for the sublime because of advanced technology that allows us more control over elements of nature and because of the increased accessibility of natural locations (through presence as well as technology). With virtual reality technology and a decent internet connection, I can virtually fly through the Grand Canyon, climb Denali, or basejump into a Hawaiian volcano. When combined with the physical access afforded by modern transportation, the argument implies that ease of access makes the environmentally sublime less mysterious. In addition, many locations that have been considered sublime have been commodified to an extent. As one example, it's possible to explore Niagara Falls from the relative safety of a catamaran-style boat operated by experienced pilots.

In response to this argument that we may simply have less opportunity to experience the sublime than we have had historically, Brady concludes that the argument fails to consider the many ways in which we still experience the sublime. She provides examples from extreme sports, natural events related to climate change, and areas where it's still possible to access wild nature.

Secondly, some remain sceptical about interpretations of the metaphysical sublime that are connected to various religious constructions. Sublime is often evoked concurrently with notions of awe and wonder that have been understood through a lens of faith and religiosity. That is, the incomprehensible is constructed with meta-narratives that find their source in a deity. Roderick Nash notes that sublime landscapes were often perceived as something purer than cultural landscapes and thus closer to God (Nash, 1982). For the Romantics, the sublime had a direct connection to transcendence, and the ultimate transcendental being was God.

Brady suggests that, while there certainly exists theistic interpretations of the metaphysics of the sublime, there is also a plurality that can be understood in terms of metaphysical imagination and transcendentalism that is not theistic by default (more on this later).

Finally, there is broad criticism that sublimity is largely anthropocentric in its conclusions. This argument suggests that sublime experiences are naturally dualistic and hierarchical, setting up humans as being apart from nature and ultimately valuing

humanity over nature. Much of Kant's writings and the writings of the Romantics concerning the sublime point to egoism and the humanizing of nature as a way to understand the self (Brady, 2013). Described in more detail below, the occurrence of the sublime often involves an elevation of the mind, which is at times construed in terms of a kind of self-admiration. "In these ways, the sublime could be seen as a type of aesthetic experience that *humanizes* nature, using its greatness as a mirror for ourselves, self-aggrandizing and 'degrading nature to our measure'" (Brady, 2013, p. 194, emphasis in the original). Reflected in this is another hint of the subject/object divide and the influence of a substance-based ontology. The Kantian sublime assumes that sublimity is a descriptive feature of either the subject or the object. Additionally, and discussed at length in earlier chapters, Cronon and others point to the sublime as more evidence of a dangerous dualism that puts control in the hands of humans (Cronon, 1996; Brady, 2013). In other words, experiences of the sublime position nature as an alien 'other,' something to conquer, control, and colonize.

While these constructions are evident in written accounts of the sublime, Brady suggests that there are other ways of interpreting sublime experiences that do not resort to anthropocentrism. One path forward involves recognizing sublime experiences as material in nature rather than being interpreted as social construction. The Romantics of the 18th century wrapped sublime language into aesthetic experiences of human taste. Recognizing the sublime as something material frees it from this construction and allows for the experience to unfold authentically and in a way that points to relationships. Further to Brady's suggestion, I argue that sublimity does not belong to subject or object; rather, it is a feature of both and arises from the *in-between*.

I will return to some of these themes later as they have significant implications for sublime experiences in outdoor adventure education. A brief survey of historical accounts of the sublime will help to add context to these discussions.

4.2 Accounts of the sublime in modern philosophy

Early philosophical texts on the sublime focus on the empirical sublime and aesthetic sublime as present in literature and art. One of the first written descriptions of sublimity has been credited to Longinus, a first-century Greek philosopher (though

the authorship and date of publication of this work, *Peri Hypsous*, is much debated) (Clewis, 2019a). This work focuses mostly on the sublime in literature and rhetoric. Later writings of the 16th & 17th centuries develop the sublime more fully and connect experiences with the sublime to aesthetics and morality.

Edmund Burke's account of the sublime focuses on the empirical. Sublime objects have specific visual, auditory, and other sensory elements about them that make them vast, infinite, rugged, powerful, etc. For Burke, experiences of the empirical sublime evoke simultaneous emotions of delight and terror (Brady, 2013). Delight is often found in the aesthetic appreciation of the object. But for Burke, any experience of the sublime must be accompanied by terror and actual risk to one's life due to the immensity, vastness, or power of the object at hand.

Immanuel Kant elaborates on this concept and describes it as 'negative pleasure.' For Kant, who wrote prolifically about the aesthetic sublime, an experience of the sublime does not necessarily require real and actual risk (though it does require risk of a type). While real risk is often involved, a sublime experience can also occur with imagined or perceived risk. In Kant's version of 'negative pleasure,' the pleasure comes from the expansion of our imagination and an awareness of our moral capacities (e.g. freedom, reason). The negative comes from frustration over our inability to understand or take in what we are exposed to (e.g. formlessness, mathematical impossibilities, etc.) and the recognition of our physical helplessness (Brady, 2013). The sublime forces us to consider our own frailty and insignificance in the vastness of wild and untamed nature. As Brady describes, "…nature's dominance is both central and indispensable to our feeling a measure to this dominance. The two forms of dominance support each other to give rise to a kind of feeling where displeasure and pleasure are codependent" (2013, p. 82).

Kant's discussion of the sublime positions it in the realm of a 'disinterested' aesthetic judgment. A disinterested judgment is a type of aesthetic judgment that is free from personal feelings or emotional preferences; thus, a sublime experience can exist materially without needing to be attached to some human construction of self-appropriation. In addition, Brady suggests that "Kant's theory characterizes a form of aesthetic appreciation that speaks to relations between humans and the rest of the natural world" (2013, p. 195).

This will become significant for later discussions around relational ontology and the role that sublime experiences play in our relations with the more-than-human world. In addition to these philosophical discussions, the sublime was a regular feature in 18th and 19th century Romantic literature. Given the influence of this literature on the development of OAE pedagogy, I will explore these contributions next.

4.3 The Romantic sublime, self-consciousness, and identity

In 1800s Romantic literature, 'wildness' is often used interchangeably with 'sublime,' juxtaposed with the ordered beauty of a well-kept English garden. The Romantics argue for the intrinsic value of wild, unordered nature which evokes feelings of the sublime and is different from (and often described in opposition to) the aesthetic experience of a cultivated landscape (i.e. beauty). These Romantic thinkers describe the sublime using various literary conventions—narrative, poetry, prose, etc. Woven throughout these descriptions are various features that constitute a sublime experience as understood by these authors.

Ralph Waldo Emerson discusses "the perpetual presence of the sublime" that is experienced from looking at the stars (Emerson, 2012, p. 6). However, it's not simply the act of looking up at the stars that evokes the sublime; it must be coupled with solitude. And not just solitude from other humans, but also solitude from society. "To go into solitude, a man [sic] needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society" (2012, p. 6). Emerson opens his book-length essay *Nature* with this statement, and a discussion of the stars, noting, "The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible" (2012, p. 6). The stars evoke a feeling of sublimity, partly due to the cognitive (and physical) inaccessibility and partly as a result of entering into solitude from society.

Henry David Thoreau's writings suggest an even deeper solitude, one that denies the presence of self. In reference to Thoreau's writings, Ralph Black notes "Such a conflation, the vanishing or erasure of the self… is the province, if not the crux of the sublime" (1994, p. 65). Black contends that throughout Thoreau's writings there is a sense of dislocation—seeking a landscape that is so foreign and unfamiliar that experiencing it authentically requires a sort of disembodiment (Black, 1994). "I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become strange to me… What is

this Titan that has possession of me?" (as quoted in Black, 1994, p. 69). In this passage from *Ktaadn* Thoreau describes his body as if he's outside of it, the mountain having taken possession of his sense of self-consciousness.

For William Wordsworth, the sublime involves a sense of imagination, the mind transcending over matter and experiencing a sense of metaphysical holism. "Mind and nature, that is, are united in their ability to 'mould', 'abstract' and 'combine' the 'outward face of things' into images 'awful and sublime'"(Shaw, 2014). Dorothy, Wordsworth's sister, also discusses the sublime in terms of this sense of metaphysical holism, "dissolv[ing] the boundaries between self and other, whether that other is understood as plant, mineral or animal or, indeed, as God" (Shaw, 2014).

More recent works in nature literature describe similar sentiments. Notably, Annie Dillard discusses self-consciousness as it relates to human interactions with the more-than-human:

> Self-consciousness, however, does hinder the experience of the present. It is the one instrument that unplugs all the rest. So long as I lose myself in a tree, say, I can scent its leafy breath or estimate its board feet of lumber, I can draw its fruits or boil tea on its branches, and the tree stays tree. But the second I become aware of myself at any of these activities—looking over my own shoulder, as it were—the tree vanishes, uprooted from the spot and flung out of sight as if it had never grown. And time, which had flowed down into the tree bearing new revelations like floating leaves at every moment, ceases. It dams, still, stagnates. Self-consciousness is the curse of the city and all that sophistication implies (1974, p. 82).

For Dillard, an 'authentic' encounter with the more-than-human requires an abandonment of self-consciousness, which is the beginning to being fully present in the moment. 'Unself-consciousness' allows Dillard to be wholly focused on the tree, not in relation to herself.

Returning to Kant, an interesting and different interplay between the sublime subject and the self emerges. Similar to the authors just described, Kant acknowledges an element of 'unself-consciousness' that arises due to the all-encompassing nature of the subject, the attributes of which fill the senses and overwhelm rational thought. There is a moment where the alterity of the other overwhelms and the concept of 'self'

vanishes from conscious thought.

For Kant, however, the experience also includes a kind of *recurrence* of self. After being momentarily suspended, conscious acknowledgment of the self re-emerges but is changed. This 'new' self is acknowledged as being 'with' the other. In this way, the self is conceived of differently. The centrality of Kant's "negative pleasure" is at the confluence of a reciprocal awareness. There is an aspect of fear, insecurity, anxiety, and humility that results, stemming from an awareness of a self that is literally unable to conceive of the 'other' through any rational thought (Brady, 2013).

The self that emerges within this experience is not one who is influenced by the other or who is now thinking about the other, it's a self that is suspended in relationship *with* the other. This '*withness*' is the confluence. Brady describes it this way,

> "… unlike cases of the beautiful, centre stage is occupied not only by nature but also by regard for the self in relation to nature… the disruption of the self that occurs here is not a self standing outside nature… Kant does not argue from the position of human separation from nature, but from our inclusion in nature and nature's inclusion in us, namely, the sensible self with its inclinations" (2013, p. 82).

A sublime experience, then, results in a deep awareness of the other to the extent that it impacts our very identity. We are changed. Thoreau, as well, seems to make continual connections between the sublime landscape and identity (Black, 1994).

These authors highlight certain features of a sublime experience, namely: 1) a loss of self-consciousness, 2) an experience of metaphysical holism, 3) the inaccessible nature of the sublime object, 4) an experience of transcendence, and 5) a connection to identity. These features are connected and interwoven. As it relates to identity and self-consciousness, the suspension and then recurrence of self-consciousness that typifies a sublime experience opens the door for the other—in this case, the more-than-human—to become part of our identity as it is bound up in relation to us. There is a metaphysical and transcendental element to this that will be explored next.

4.4 Metaphysical imagination, transcendence, and virtue

I have suggested the possibility of encounters with the more-than-human world

being conceived of as material or primary experiences. As discussed in the previous chapter, Martin Buber described encounter as being grounded in the *a priori* of relation, connecting to "the innate You" which is always present. Similarly, feelings of the sublime often incur a metaphysical dimension. Ronald Hepburn referred to this as *metaphysical imagination* (1996). Here I suggest that metaphysical imagination constitutes the root of the primary, which contributes to a transcendence of self and results in a virtue-oriented ethic towards the more-than-human world.

4.4.1 The Role of metaphysical imagination

As noted earlier, the metaphysical nature of the sublime has become problematic in recent history due to connections with religiosity and/or scepticism around the value of metaphysical experiences. A rejection of this metaphysical dimension has led to what Brady calls *aesthetic eliminativism*, "…an attempt to theorize away the metaphysical component of aesthetic responses" (2013, p. 190, emphasis in the original). These metaphysical components, however, are inherent within the sublime. I argue that there is a *numinal* quality that constitutes the fabric of a sublime experience. Theorizing the metaphysical components away cheapens the experience and dilutes it so that it is purely cognitive. The profound emotions and experience of transcendence the sublime invokes are what sets these experiences apart from experiences of beauty, awe, or grandeur. These profound emotions are metaphysical in nature, challenging us to confront the other relationally, in holism, without reliance on human constructs and artifices.

Both Hepburn and Brady suggest that metaphysical imagination is holistic in that it takes into account both the present sensory elements of the encounter (the specific substances, colors, textures, etc) and the "world as a whole" (Hepburn, 1996, p. 192). Or, as Brady puts it, "Functioning in a non-fanciful mode, in response to natural objects and phenomena, metaphysical imagination involves 'seeing as' or 'interpreting as' inseparable from perceptual qualities" (Brady, 2013, p. 192). In this context, "perceptual qualities" are the embodied and empirical aspects of a sublime experience—the sensory perceptions of color and context, the feel of the wind, the roar of water, etc. In other words, metaphysical imagination does not supplant these embodied aspects of the experience in the form of cognitive construction. Embodiment

and metaphysical imagination exist in tandem. The perceptual qualities invoke the metaphysical, and metaphysical imagination enhances the experience of embodiment.

4.4.2 Metaphysical imagination and transcendence

There is a type of transcendence at work through sublime encounters via metaphysical imagination. The paradox of the seeming conflicting negative and positive emotions is interpreted through metaphysical imagination and leads to a transcended self, "one in which we get a better sense of how we are related to nature" (Brady, 2013, p. 193). Thus, the natural sublime provides access to a primary experience of relation. It is transcendental in that it elevates us to see ourselves *with* nature, the resurgence of self that can be reimagined as I-You.

Transcendence understood in terms of metaphysical imagination helps to qualify the material nature of sublime experiences. Through sublime encounters, we are made aware of a relational dimension that is beyond the reach of cognition and language. This relational dimension is a combination of identities; it includes both subjects in a reciprocal I-You vortex of colliding identities. The transcended self includes the other, and vice versa. This resists our ability to comprehend cognitively and so must be understood through metaphysical imagination and intuition.

4.4.3 The connection to virtue

Brady suggests a connection between aesthetic experiences of the sublime and morality in the form of humility and respect (2013). Rather than being anthropocentric in nature (the sublime self), a sublime encounter with the natural world invites a cognitive response of wonder. Rather than trying to understand or construct the experience rationally, the mind instead embraces the experience as unknowable and metaphysical, and that interpretation leads to a sense of wonder and awe.[9] This sense of wonder can lead to a virtue of humility and attitude of respect for the more-than-human world. We recognize our inability to make rational sense of the experience through normal cognitive construction, making us aware of our limitations—both cognitive (due to metaphysical imagination) and physical (due to the embodied nature

[9] It's also possible that the response can instead lead to fear, which instead would produce certain vices such as dominance.

of the experience). From this state of humility, our stance changes. Rather than seeing the natural world as something to dominate or subjugate, we instead approach it with respect in recognition that there are forces at play (relationships) we cannot understand, let alone attempt to control.

This impacts behaviours through an ethical response rooted in virtue. Deontological and consequentialist ethics attempt to answer the questions "what must I do?" through rational and logical argumentation around such things as duties, rights, and the consequences of our actions. In contrast, virtue ethics starts from the question of "who must I be?" A sublime experience does not allow for rational argumentation due to its metaphysical nature. Any ethical response that extends from a sublime experience comes from identity and the development of moral character or virtues. As described above, a sublime experience that embraces the metaphysical through metaphysical imagination impacts identity by changing our posture towards one of humility and respect for the other. Our valuation of the other changes, and this in turn drives our behaviours.

A virtue-oriented approach to environmental ethics has been espoused by many modern philosophers (Plumwood, 2000; Sandler, 2007; Bonnett, 2012; Whyte and Cuomo, 2017). Of particular interest, Ronald Sandler lays out five virtues associated with respect for nature: care, compassion, restitutive justice, nonmaleficence (or commitment to do no harm to the other), and ecological sensitivity (2007). If a sublime experience leads to attitudes of humility and respect, then it would follow that it also leads to the development of these virtues and impacts behaviours through a stance rooted in care and compassion.

In summary, the metaphysical and transcendental nature of the sublime can thus provide a response to arguments that sublime experiences are largely anthropocentric. While human constructions of the sublime (stemming mostly from the romantic influence of the 1800s) often center on the 'sublime human', a recognition of the material nature of sublime experiences highlights the metaphysical dimension that gives rise to that which is in-between and encompasses both the human and the sublime subject. Transcending a narrow, anthropocentric construction that relies on rationality, metaphysical imagination allows space for the epistemologically irrational through wonder, giving rise to a virtue-oriented ethic stemming from humility and

respect.

4.5 The natural sublime and I-You encounters

I have already alluded to ways in which the natural sublime is connected to Buber's notion of an I-You encounter. In the next chapter, we will explore this in more detail in the context of relational ontology. Here I would like to argue that, while Buber's notion of I-You encounters is not phenomenologically the same thing as a sublime experience, there are similarities in the metaphysical and relational components of these two lived experiences.

Perhaps most relevant to this thesis, both I-You encounters and the natural sublime can be conceived of as primary experiences. As discussed in the previous chapter, Buber makes several references to I-You encounters as being material and *a priori.* Similarly, there is evidence with the Kantian sublime that these experiences, too, are primary. There is a rawness and authenticity at play that temporarily resists human constructs.

The primary nature of these encounters suggests a deeper connection to the human psyche. We've seen that both I-You encounters and the sublime impact human identity through an experience of transcendence. In both cases, the human subject is exposed to something wholly other and enters into a kind of reciprocal relationship that embraces both the human and non-human. There is a resulting impact to identity, a recognition of the relational dynamic that exists between the I and the You and that sustains both within the transcendental plane.

I do not suggest that an I-You encounter is the same as a sublime experience or vice versa. For example, where experiences of the natural sublime tend to be focused on the landscape as a whole, I-You encounters tend to be focused on a specific subject within the landscape (more on this later). Despite the differences between these two phenomena, I argue that both share a relational underpinning that relies on metaphysical imagination and results in a transcendental event. This transcendental space allows humans to recognize the disinterested aesthetic value of the more-than-human. To be disinterested means that pleasure is not dependent upon the fulfillment of desire and does not evoke feelings of desire. Aesthetics that are disinterested are valued intrinsically, and this aesthetic dimension of sublime creates a necessary bridge

to an ethic rooted in respect, care, and compassion.

With this context and framing of sublime experiences in nature, the metaphysical and transcendental nature of these experiences, and connections to I-You encounters, I will now explore ways in which the sublime has been present in outdoor adventure education.

4.6 The sublime in outdoor adventure education

As noted in Chapter 2, the North American concept of wilderness was heavily influenced by the ideas of Romanticism. More specific to outdoor adventure education, Jay Roberts notes Romantic transcendentalism as one of five theoretical 'currents' that have shaped OAE pedagogy (Roberts, 2012). Roberts specifically highlights the influential literary voices of Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir and the educational influences of John Dewey and Kurt Hahn, who Roberts claims are also products of the Romantic movement (Roberts, 2018).

'Romanticism' is a debated term, and there is not a cohesive definition that makes up what exactly could be considered 'Romantic.' It has been described variously as a movement, a mood, a turn, and an intellectual revolution (Berlin, 2013). However, two themes that seem to be consistent across various definitions include the notion of the innate goodness of human nature and the counter-cultural reactionism of the Romantic intellectual movement.

4.6.1 Nature as good

The concept of human nature as inherently good is reflective of the axiological idea that to be 'natural' is to be 'good.' This is in stark contrast to Judeo-Christian thought in which human nature is considered to be distorted by sin, thus humans have inherited a 'sin nature' which must be continuously kept in check by a strict moral code. Indeed, Thomas Hobbes (2008) suggested that humans are naturally selfish and will descend into a state of civil war if they do not agree on a social contract to govern them. These ideas were prevalent during the 17th and 18th centuries when education followed a strict rule of order and behaviour.

On the contrary, Romantics saw the inherent nature of humans as good. Evil, for the Romantics, comes about as a result of social and cultural influences that make

humans complacent and entitled (Hirsch, 1996).

This concept, when extended beyond humans to the more-than-human world, results in a value system that equates 'natural' with 'good.' Thus, an unspoilt wilderness was conceived as being more holy, closer to its transcendent source (i.e. God) and not manipulated by humans. In addition, humans themselves are also good if they are allowed to be 'natural.' Thus, "the child is neither a scaled-down, ignorant version of the adult nor a formless piece of clay in need of moulding, rather, the child is a special being in its own right with unique, trustworthy—indeed holy—impulses that should be allowed to develop and run their course" (Hirsch, 1996, p. 74).

This has impacted the field of outdoor adventure education in two ways. First is the choice in locating programmes in sublime landscapes. As Roberts notes, "the educational journey often involves a trip to another place… and that place is often the location of a more powerful, sublime, and thus transcendent experience" (Roberts, 2012, p. 45). The assumed rationale here is that being physically and materially closer to what is 'natural' and 'good' will have the effect of recalling and amplifying the 'good' inherent in human nature. In addition, the transcendental nature of sublime landscapes has the added benefit of bringing participants closer to God. The sublime wilderness has been referred to by some as a 'thin' place, were the veil between the human world and the spiritual world is more translucent. While no one really knows where the concept of 'thin' places originates, most point to ancient Celtic spirituality as having first articulated this concept (Balzer, 2013).

Second is related to pedagogical techniques. With strong influence from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, OAE pedagogy is unapologetically student-centred. Students are perceived as naturally and inherently curious; this curiosity is, by extension, seen as 'good.' Education is fashioned in a way that draws out the curiosity and interests of the students, rather than imposing ideas and impressions from cultural and social conventions which are seen as less pure.

In modern philosophy, the concept that what is 'natural' is 'good,' which stems from ethical naturalism, is considered a naturalistic fallacy (Moore, 1993). The naturalistic fallacy argues that the concept of 'good' is a human construct, determined by social and cultural influences, whereas 'natural' is a physical property and is not morally determinate. While the moral debate over ethical naturalism is beyond the

scope of this project, it is worth noting that modern philosophy has largely considered the concept to be logically problematic.

4.6.2 Romanticism as counter-cultural

I would argue that another common theme running through romantic thought and literature is a challenge to the enlightenment (Garrard, 2006) and the mainstream norms and directions of society. In this way, Romanticism can be seen as almost prophetic, with thinkers and writers issuing warnings about the trajectory of government and culture. This may be the very reason why a definition for Romanticism is so elusive. Many who claimed to be Romantics contradicted the thoughts and ideas of other Romantics (Berlin, 2013). But perhaps what unites these thinkers under the banner of Romanticism is the counter-cultural nature of their ideas.

The Romantics sought to offer antidotes to the downfalls of mainstream culture—for Thoreau and Muir, the antidote was realized in and through nature. This is reflected in OAE through Kurt Hahn's "six declines of modern youth" which provide the foundational outcomes for Outward Bound pedagogy (Outward Bound, 2020). For Hahn, the natural environment was seen as a way to address these issues and provide a sort of antidote through the character development of youth. These sentiments are also evident in the histories of the scouting and camping movements in the United States (Martin *et al.*, 2017).

Concurrent to the development of the Boy Scouts, the Woodcraft Folk was also developed in the early 1900s in similar fashion. Started by Ernest Thompson Seton, who was himself a Chief Scout under Baden-Powell, the Woodcraft Folk romanticized the life of the plains 'Indians' (Loynes, 2017), misappropriating indigenous ways of life by disregarding their cosmologies and ontologies and instead adopting certain practices towards the development of character (Sheridan, 2013).

A pedagogical connection can be seen here between the Kantian sublime's 'negative pleasure' and the character development aims of traditional OAE programmes. The negative emotion and associated fear (both real and perceived) expose a power struggle—human survival vs. nature—and sets the stage for exercising courage and tenacity in the face of something much more powerful and incomprehensible. Additionally, when programmed as a group experience, there often

results the sense of unity, comradery, and interdependence William James calls for in his “moral equivalent to war” which, as previously discussed, was a one of the primary aims of Kurt Hahn and the founding of Outward Bound.[10]

A specific example illustrating the counter-cultural reactionism evident in OAE practices can be found in Hahn’s less publicized attempt to address what he perceived as the feminizing of the male gender. Cronon suggests that in the late 1800s “the comforts and seductions of civilized life were especially insidious for men, who all too easily became emasculated by the feminizing tendencies of civilization” (1996, p. 8). Perhaps more poignant on the heels of the first World War, Hahn’s schools sought to address male emerging sexuality and repress homosexual tendencies. Franklin Vernon makes the argument that Hahn’s adventure pedagogy was in many ways a form of conversion therapy that addressed his fear that homosexuality would be the death of society (2020). Consistent with Cronon’s critiques, outdoor adventure became a vehicle for men to locate their rugged masculinity despite the ‘femininizing’ nature of social life. As it relates to ‘nature as good,’ this example illustrates the ways in which ‘good’ was understood as a cultural notion, rather than some universal ‘good.’

The benefit of hindsight highlights many aspects of the Romantic sublime as being overly anthropocentric and creating problematic dualisms between humans and non-human nature, as already discussed. However, a more judicious treatment of the Romantic sublime and the resulting pedagogical focus for OAE demonstrates the ways in which these Romantic thinkers challenged cultural trends they perceived as problematic. While we may not agree with their assessment of culture, it’s possible that the phenomenon of the natural sublime is a redeemable feature of pedagogical focus.

4.7 Reclaiming the sublime

Returning to the problematic effects of the anthropocentric aims inherent in OAE pedagogy, it becomes evident that places which have the potential to inspire sublime experiences provide suitable environments for the development of character traits such as courage and tenacity (which were often associated with masculinity). The

[10] This can be conceived of as counter to the development of humility and virtues of respect and care that Brady (2013) suggests.

complex phenomenology of sublime experiences introduces a natural component of fear (the negative part of Kant's 'negative pleasure') and provides a worthy opponent against which man[11] can test his mental and physical bravado. The sheer alterity of the wilderness—it's 'wildness', inscrutable depth and breadth—sets an ideal stage for the development of tenacity, courage, and determination.

In reaction to the material experience of the sublime, this is how it has been constructed within OAE pedagogy, and I have argued that it has served to set up an adversarial relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. In many pursuits competition has become the norm—man's battle with nature and with himself. This sense of competition has continued to frame engagement with the natural world, with experiences often focused on a particular tick list, conquering feats of nature, first ascents/descents, and increasingly extreme objectives.

Looking beyond the development of character, locating educational programming in sublime locations also serves to emphasize the 'otherness' of more-than-human nature. Concepts like Leave No Trace that seemingly exist to protect and care for the more-than-human world create an ontological structure that places humans outside of the natural world and highlight the perception that our mere presence brings harm to that which is not human (Turner, 2002). While this is true in many respects, and climate change is exposing the depth of the negative impacts humans have had, isn't it also true that humans have the capacity to live in harmony *with* and *in* the more than human world—to cultivate, restore, and repair damage that has been done?

In light of these things, an argument could be made that OAE should steer clear of experiences of the sublime. If these experiences serve to create adversarial relationships and false dualisms between humans and the more-than-human world, then perhaps critics of the natural sublime are right and this concept is outmoded.

This argument, however, is short sighted in terms of the complex phenomenology of sublime experiences. In my above assessment of experiences of the natural sublime in OAE, the argument is relevant as it relates to *constructions* of

[11] 'Man' is used intentionally here, as these early programmes were almost exclusively focused on masculinity

sublime experiences that have been largely anthropocentric in nature. However, I argue for a *material* experience of the sublime that escapes these anthropocentric judgments.

Acknowledging the material nature of the sublime suggests an opportunity to reclaim the natural sublime from its Romantic anthropocentrism. A reconstruction of sublime experiences invites an opportunity to reimagine ways in which the more-than-human world is an active participant in outdoor experiences rather than, as Daniel's research suggests, a canvas, catalyst, or crucible through which interpersonal aims can be realized (Daniel, 2010).

Reclaiming the natural sublime will naturally involve deconstructing it from problematic cultural associations. If a material experience of the sublime is possible, what might this look like? How is it recognized? And what happens when it occurs? Stripping away cultural constructions requires consideration of a comprehensive philosophical theory of the sublime. Philosophers have long debated whether or not a theory of the sublime is even possible (Sircello, 1993; Forsey, 2007). However, without some clarity on this point, reclaiming the sublime may prove to be impossible.

4.7.1 Considering a theory of the sublime

In the late 20th century conversations emerged around sublime theory. Analytic philosophers have struggled to reconcile the transcendent nature of sublime experiences with modern ontological and epistemological structures. Jane Forsey arguably provides the most convincing case to suggest that a theory of the sublime is contradictory and/or incoherent. She summarizes the problem as this, "If we focus on the metaphysical status of the sublime object, our epistemology becomes problematic, but if we address instead the epistemological transcendence of a certain experience, we still seem forced to make *some* metaphysical claim about the object of that experience" (2007, p. 383, emphasis in the original). Robert Clewis outlines Forsey's analytical argument this way, "The object is transcendent and inaccessible. If the object is transcendent and inaccessible, it is not possible to comprehend and provide an adequate theory of it. Thus, it is not possible to comprehend and provide an adequate theory of the object" (Clewis, 2019b, p. 342 n. 10). The foundation of Forsey's argument rests in Guy Sircello's (1993) assertion that the object of a sublime experience—whether that be a vast mountain range, an endless starry sky, or a raging waterfall—is

sublime in that it is epistemologically transcendent and thus inaccessible to rational thought. That is, the object evades our attempts to comprehend due to certain features—immensity, vastness, power, etc.

Both Sircello and Forsey question the possibility of a theory of the sublime. Sircello is more optimistic that it could be possible by decoupling the epistemological thesis from its metaphysical implications. Forsey, however, does not think this is possible and thus suggests that there is no valid or rational way forward for a sublime theory. She summarizes,

> With Sircello's second formulation, we escape incoherence only to find ourselves facing some ineffable or mysterious reality that we do not experience directly, that we cannot know, but that nevertheless we must posit as existing, of which the sublime gives us a glimmer. This revision of the original thesis does not succeed in omitting the theme of ontological transcendence: instead… it renders the ontology all the more mysterious and all the more tantalizingly out of reach (2007, p. 385).

While Forsey lays out a strong analytic argument, she fails to acknowledge the full phenomena of human experiences of the sublime. Her argument is unnecessarily reductionistic and does not acknowledge the holistic interplay of emotions and intersubjectivity that is evident in descriptions of sublime experiences. As an example, Forsey, in her attempt to isolate the ontological dimension of the sublime, narrows in on the object of a sublime encounter. After acknowledging problems associated with a particular object as ontologically sublime, she suggests that "the true sublime object can only be a Kantian postulate about our moral being" (2007, p. 385). In other words, our only other option is to accept Kant's notion that the sublime overwhelms our intellectual capacities and reveals an underlying moral condition; therefore, the 'object' of the sublime is actually the human condition. Forsey rejects both of these, concluding that, "The sublime… cannot be an object of experience, but neither can it be a description of the cognitive failure of a given subject. If it is to deal only with some feeling or emotive state, it devolves to no theory whatsoever. In the one interpretation, the sublime can be nothing; in the second, anything; and in the third, it cannot be theorized at all" (2007, p. 388).

Responses to Forsey's assessment have suggested metaphysical imagination as a way forward in arriving at a coherent theory of the sublime (Brady, 2013; Clewis, 2019b). Indeed, Forsey's argument may be considered a form of *aesthetic eliminativism* as defined by Brady and discussed above. In addition to Hepburn (1996) and Brady's (2013) articulation of metaphysical imagination, Clewis also draws on a theory of imagination and suggests that the sublime is "…primarily… a response to something perceived rather than thought or conceived" (2019b, p. 341).

Contemporary scholar Sandra Shapshay (2019) has put forth a theory of the sublime that relies on aesthetics. Shapshay suggests that Forsey's dilemma can be solved through a focus on theoretical work in aesthetics. Similar to Brady and Kant (Brady, 2013), Shapshay suggests a *family of aesthetic responses* that shifts according to historical and cultural values. After establishing this framework, she suggests two types of contemporary sublime responses, the 'thin' and the 'thick.' She states, "…'thick' sublime response involves reflection on the complexities of relationship between human beings and the world in which we find ourselves, whereas 'thin' sublime response does not, and consists rather in a bare cognitive appraisal of the object and immediate affective arousal" (2019, p. 335).

This work by contemporary scholars is promising for efforts to reclaim the sublime from its problematic history. In particular, Shapshay's description of 'thin' and 'thick' sublime responses carries similarities to my earlier discussions of Buber's description of I-It and I-You relationships. A shift in language can be perceived between Forsey's argument—which seems to focus on the metaphysical and epistemological features of a sublime object—and Shapshay's argument—which shifts focus from the particular object to a "reflection on the complexities of relationship" (2019, p. 335). Similar to Buber, Shapshay acknowledges two different modes of relating to something other-than-human—one of which is purely cognitive and another which is much more complex. This latter 'thick' response, which I suggest mirrors Buber's description of the I-You, is complex in that it involves seemingly contradictory emotions ('negative pleasure') and results in a heightened awareness of the human subject *with* the sublime subject. There is an awareness of a space between that is shared by both, influenced by both, and has the potential to fundamentally change both.

I argue that, in addition to the appeal to metaphysical imagination and aesthetic response, both the sublime and I-You encounters can benefit from a metaphysical paradigm that is rooted in relational ontology. Ontological pluralism that acknowledges both objects and relations as ontologically primary creates a path for ways of knowing that arise out of intuition and perception. Where a sublime experience overwhelms our mental capacities—our cognitive reasoning structures related to the object or landscape—it may enhance our perception of the relational dimension that exists between the subject and the sublime object. Relations are not visible and do not succumb to the kinds of empirical and reductionistic knowing we normally apply to objects. This relational dimension, however, is epistemologically accessible through intuition and metaphysical imagination.

I am not suggesting an abandonment of substance-based ontologies. Rather, I'm suggesting a perspective that embraces ontological pluralism and recognizes the validity of multiple ontological paradigms. The following chapter will explore relational ontology in more detail.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has explored the phenomenon of the natural sublime from the perspective of ancient and modern philosophy, including the literature of the Romantics. Phenomenological features of the natural sublime include:[12]

- Metaphysical transcendence (Brady, 2013; Clewis, 2019b),
- A sense of oneness with the world (Wordsworth, 1974; Schopenhauer, 2019),
- Loss of self-consciousness (Black, 1994; Emerson, 2012),
- A rising above, release of everyday concerns (Brady, 2012a),
- A resurgence of self that has been changed by the experience (Kant, 2008; Brady, 2013),
- A stretching, expansion of mental faculties (Clewis, 2019a, 2019b),
- Temporary (Roberts, 2012, 2018),

[12] These features are summarized by Clewis (Clewis, 2019b) and elaborated upon here with additional suggestions arising from my own analysis.

- A feeling of participation in the vastness of the other (Wordsworth, 1974; Clewis, 2019b),
- A connection to identity (Brady, 2013)
- A resulting sense of humility, which leads to respect and care (Brady, 2013).

Exploring these features revealed the ways in which sublime experiences are connected to identity and lead to a self-consciousness that has been changed by the experience. The potential exists for a resulting humility, which encourages the development of virtues of respect and care. After exploring the role of sublime experiences in OAE, I argued for a reclamation of the sublime, re-imagined through a lens of relational ontology. While philosophers have struggled to produce a theory of the sublime, I suggested metaphysical imagination and relational ontology as a way to relieve the epistemological worries that have prevented theories from being explored. The next chapter will further explore relational ontology arising from North American indigenous philosophy.

Chapter 5: The Primacy of Relations

In this chapter I suggest that the work of reclaiming the sublime must begin by re-evaluating western,[13] Euro-centric ontologies, which conceive of substances as ontologically primary and relationships as ontologically derivative. After exploring this landscape, I argue for the adoption of an ontological structure, informed by the indigenous concepts of *Place-Thought* and ideas of (new) materialism that embrace both substance and relationship in a non-dualistic synergy, recognizes the agency of the more-than-human world, and opens the door for both sublime experiences and I-You encounters that are epistemologically accessible.

5.1 The western ontological landscape

While it is outside of the scope of this work to present a thorough rendering of western ontological thought, it will be helpful to provide a brief (and somewhat simplistic) overview of some of the primary features that drive ontological thinking in the Euro-centric west.

Western ontologies tend to focus on *substance*, that is, what makes up the nature of a being or an object. In our attempts to explore the nature of existence, the ideas of the west have encouraged us to think of substance as *primary* and thus *a priori.* Following from this assumption, substances must exist before relationships are formed; therefore, where substances are primary, relationships are *derivative*.

In addition to the primacy of substance, western ontologies also suggest a substance-based dualism as a foundation for ontology. Humans are physical beings—flesh and blood, dependent upon outside sources for sustenance, with a distinct beginning and end. We are also cognitive beings—capable of reflective analysis and multi-layered awareness of both ourselves, the things around us, and our impact and influence on the things we encounter. Thus, to be human is to be both body and mind, and these two substances make up our identity and drive our actions and interactions with the world around us.

[13] The word 'western' here and following specifically refers to the ideas of the Euro-centric west, exclusive of Indigenous ideals and philosophy.

Cartesian dualism is perhaps the clearest example of a substance-based ontology that reduces the nature of *being* down to the mental and physical realms. French philosopher René Descartes claimed that cognitive thought can exist outside of a physical body, and therefore the reality of cognition is the essence of being human. This ontological framework that perceives consciousness and identity as *a priori* leads to assumptions that humans possess inherent and pre-determined identity and consciousness. This pairs nicely with theological notions that humans are created by God with specific purpose and a divinely crafted and unique identity, and also feeds into notions of teleology and the aforementioned assumption within 17th century ethical naturalism that to be 'natural' is to be 'good.'

In partial contrast with this are the ideas of existentialism, which claim that "existence precedes essence." This claim, famously made by French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, declares that the human body must exist prior to developing any kind of identity or consciousness. For Sartre, the body is *a priori* and is filled in with consciousness and identity. So, while the ideas of Sartre and Descartes differ in their claims around mind vs. body as *a priori,* both Cartesian and Existential thought embrace a mind-body dualism based in substance, and both see the *relations* between substances as derivative.[14]

Epistemologically, then, our ability to *know* is also based on substance. To truly understand something, we must be able to identify its substance and to reduce that substance into analyzable units that help us conceive of the whole. In the physical realm (the realm of the body), this is achieved through empiricism and reductionism. In the cognitive realm of the mind, this is achieved through causal determinism (e.g. psychological experimentation that identifies behaviours resulting from certain conditions in a causal relationship).

There is also a resulting ontological-epistemological divide that pervades western philosophy. Mind-body dualism results in an epistemological framework that

[14] While existentialism could be seen as moving towards viewing relations as primary (particularly evident in the writings of Martin Buber), the challenge in defining and categorizing what we mean by 'relation' has proven to be exceedingly difficult for philosophers. For more on this, see Wildman, "An Introduction to Relational Ontology," in *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology.*

separates our perceptions of the world from what constitutes it (Descartes, 1996). This divide results in an epistemology that requires the one perceiving (human) to be separate from that which is being perceived (non-human) (Kant, 2008).

In addition to substance-based dualism, western ontologies also suggest that humans are the only entities that possess agency. That is, only humans have the ability to act intentionally based on certain mental states such as desires and beliefs. While non-human entities can be viewed as agents, they do not possess agency. Instead, non-humans are driven more by instinct and survival and the structures that make up their substance. In this view, humans are seen to have more advanced cognition that allows a level of evaluation and reflection related to action. This creates a hierarchical structure where humans are more advanced and thus 'above' the non-human world, and, by extension, valued more highly.

A western-based ontological lens is problematic for both the natural sublime and Buber's notion of I-You encounters. For the former, western ontology challenges an ability to experience the sublime or discuss sublime experiences due to the nature of metaphysical transcendence. In essence, substance-based ontologies make the sublime unknowable, as discussed previously. Similarly, making sense of Buber's philosophy of dialogue requires an examination of his metaphysics, specifically his ontology (Berkovitis, 1962; Wood, 1969).

5.1.1 The Sublime in western ontologies

As previously discussed, experiences with sublime nature highlight the 'otherness' of the more-than-human world, often to the exclusion of the observer. The sublime awakens us to something outside of ourselves, requiring a sort of disembodiment before consciousness rushes in to make sense of the experience. Part of what makes the experience sublime is the recognition of the degree of 'otherness,' a realization that the human mind cannot comprehend the entity before her due to its alterity.

Robert Clewis outlines five characteristics, stemming from western thought, that contribute to "sublime imagination"—specifically the experience of pleasure that a sublime experience elicits:

1. The stretching, expansion, or intense exercise of the mental faculties, above all the imagination (Aikin, Addison, Priestley).
2. The rising above or release from everyday affairs and concerns (Kant, Schopenhauer).
3. A sense of oneness with the world or finding a home or place in the universe (Schopenhauer), including a moral place or calling (Kant).
4. Engagement of the 'fight, flight, or freeze' system, from a safe distance (hence, not inciting actual fear). This promotes a sense of vitality and elicits associated physiological responses (Kant, Burke).
5. Participation in the power or vastness, not of the world or universe as a whole, but of the object (Mendelssohn, Wordsworth) (2019b, p. 349).

A common theme that runs throughout these five characteristics is an intense awareness of 'the other,' an awareness that impacts cognitive understanding of both the self and the other. While Clewis focuses on pleasure, there is also a sense of being uplifted, elevated to a cognitive plane that is not always accessible to the human mind.

Jay Roberts, acknowledging the alterity of sublime wilderness, also discusses the degree to which sublime experiences are temporary. To illustrate this, Roberts notes the language used by Emerson in a letter to John Muir,

> [T]he solitude of the wilderness is "a sublime mistress but an intolerable wife." And here we see the problem. Wilderness and the sublime feelings it evokes are always temporary—like a visit to a mistress that, while potentially pleasurable, entails the hard crash back down to the realities of domesticity and the everyday (2012, p. 44).

While Roberts repeats Roderick Nash's mistake here and misquotes Emerson,[15] I do think that there may be some truth to the notion that sublime 'feelings' are often (though I would not say always) temporary. The elevated cognitive plane that is accessed through the sublime is by its very nature transcendent. However, I would

[15] Emerson's letter actually reads, "And there are drawbacks also to solitude, who is a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife" (Emerson, 1872). Both Nash and Roberts seem to miss that Emerson is referring to solitude in his letter to Muir, which he mentions several times, not to the 'wilderness' itself as the location of Muir's solitude.

argue that sublime experiences have the potential to influence relationships beyond the isolated experience itself.

Not only are these experiences at times temporary in their effect on the human psyche, but they are also disconnected from the everyday due to distance. Quoting again from Roberts, “Thus the most powerful lived experiences happen somewhere else, not ‘here’”(2012, p. 45).

In addition, sublime experiences are often inaccessible because they do not fit within western onto-epistemological structures. There is a dissonance between the experience itself and a western construction of the experience, which naturally focuses on the *object* of the sublime as the primary element of the experience. This was discussed in the previous chapter as it relates to transcendence. If a *substance* is perceived as transcendent, it is beyond our capacity to know and therefore inaccessible to our epistemology.

5.1.2 Buber’s philosophy of dialogue in western ontologies

Martin Buber’s philosophy of dialogue challenges western notions of ontology. While Buber appears to perpetuate a dualism, rather than a dualism that resides in *substance*, Buber’s dualism resides in *relation*.

Buber was heavily influence by Kant and was a self-described philosophical anthropologist (Scott, no date). As such, his philosophical enquiry was focused on unpacking what it means to be human. And, while this question begins for Buber as a solitary, internal pursuit, it can only be fully realized in the relations between subjects.

In many ways Buber’s philosophy of dialogue suggests a paucity of experience when the world is viewed from a western ontological lens. Specifically, the I-It mode of being, as described by Buber, stems from a substance-based ontology and accompanying epistemology where the ‘I’ seeks to understand the nature of ‘It’ through detached observation and reduction. Reading Buber’s description of I-It experiences feels familiar for those of us who have been influenced by Western philosophical thought. An I-It experience is almost entirely cognitive and one-sided—'I’ contemplating the substance of ‘It’ and coming to certain instrumental conclusions about its spatial and temporal characteristics.

Buber refers to I-It and I-You interchangeably as modes of relation and modes of existence. These are not just different thought patterns; they are different in their ontological and epistemological structures. When Buber transitions and begins describing the I-You mode of being, his language is much more difficult for our western minds to interpret. This mode recognizes the irreducibility of 'You.' Where 'It' is fixed in space and time and separate from 'I', 'You' is in dynamic relation with 'I' in a reciprocal dialogue.

In the first few pages of Buber's treatise, after establishing the basic word pairs that illustrate the basic attitudes of humans, Buber states, "Basic words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a *mode of existence*" (1970, p. 53, emphasis mine). Kaufman notes that in the first edition of the book, Buber follows this with, "Basic words do not signify things but relations" (1970, p. 53, note 1). From here, Buber discusses a form of metaphysical holism that grounds itself in relationship.

Substance-based ontologies are by contrast reductionistic in nature, as discussed earlier. For Descartes, "investigat[ing] the truth of things" consisted first of reducing the object to its simplest parts, "and then, starting with the intuition of the simplest ones of all, try to ascend through the same steps to a knowledge of the rest" (as quoted in Bengson, Cuneo and Shafer-Landau, 2022, p. 16). This process requires the investigating person to be neutral and distanced from that which is being reduced.

However, Buber's notion of I-You describes the ways in which 'You' is conceived only through the lens of 'I'. Or, as he states it, "When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said, too" (Buber, 1970, p. 54). Thus, the metaphysical holism described by Buber includes the observer. This is not coherent with the onto-epistemology of western ideals, which seeks knowledge through separation and reduction. The 'You' of the I-You encounter cannot be known through substance-based epistemology; it is connected metaphysically to the 'I'.

Our abilities to conceive of both the sublime and I-You encounters gains clarity when viewed through a lens of relational ontology. While Buber's work was focused on an anthropological understanding of the nature of humans and human experience, I argue that what he actually describes is experience and encounter from the ontological lens of relationship. This lens, while not completely discarding the existence of

substance, reveals the nature of humans as being holistically connected to all things through relationship.

Additionally, the problem of metaphysical transcendence that accompanies experiences of the sublime can be addressed by applying a relational ontology lens. Metaphysical transcendence is problematic when the thing that is transcendent is a substance. To say that a substance is transcendent is to say that it is unknowable. It is not possible to comprehend through Cartesian methods of understanding, and these are the methods we employ when we seek to understand substance. When the thing that is transcendent is relational, however, it becomes epistemically accessible through experience and intuition.

With the hope of gaining some clarity by applying a different ontological lens, it will help to unpack the meaning of relational ontology. What follows is not an attempt to provide a full account or theory of relational ontology, which is beyond the scope of this project. Rather, my intent is to discuss this ontological lens as it relates to the phenomenology of the sublime and I-You encounters and to suggest relational ontology as way to reconcile the metaphysical-epistemological challenges of these phenomena.

5.2 Relational ontology

In contrast to substance-based ontologies, relational ontology argues that "relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves" (Wildman, 2010, p. 55). Western philosophers and theorists have long struggled to create frameworks for relational ontology, primarily due to the slippery nature of what we mean by 'relational'. Relationships in general are notoriously illusive and not easily distilled to analyzable concepts (Wildman, 2010). This is certainly the case with human-human relationships. I might refer to someone as a 'friend' or 'acquaintance' based on how emotionally safe I feel with the other person, how much time we've spent together, or the nature of our shared experiences. And this perception might not be mutual; I may call someone a 'friend', and that person may refer to me as an 'acquaintance'. We have a plethora of other ways to categorize human-human relationships as well—colleague, family, lover, enemy, etc. These sentiments denote, to some degree, the connection the other has to my own identity. Identities are fluid, however, always in flux and influenced by society. "Relationality is

therefore an ongoing creative and recursive process—a moving target—actively defining and redefining social relationships as well as social beings" (Baltus and Baires, 2018a, p. 153).

Despite these difficulties, relational theories and accompanying ontological paradigm shifts have gained attention recently, particularly in the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology (Todd, 2016; Baires, 2018). What is being called an 'ontological turn', post-structuralist approaches to research in these disciplines recognize "the activeness and entanglement of human and other-than-human materials and places" (Baires, 2018, p. viii).

This relational approach within archaeology changes the way substances are understood--from being static backdrops on the stage of human civilization to instead being dynamic and reciprocal players in the culture and society of ancient peoples (Baires, 2018). It also challenges western Cartesian dualities and recognizes the role both humans and more-than-humans play in constructing reality (Swenson, 2015; Baires, 2018). Given these dynamics, it has become increasingly more common to draw parallels between continental philosophy in the areas of phenomenology with perspectives in relational ontology (Ingold, 2006; Todd, 2016; Baltus and Baires, 2018b).

It is tempting to think of relational ontology as something new—some modern paradigm that advances our theoretical understanding of reality. Indeed, researchers have written about an ontological turn within (new) materialism, and there is a connection with relational ontology. The very notion of this being an 'ontological turn' suggests new ways of thinking. However, while it might be new to those of us who have 'grown up' philosophically under colonial structures, many theorists have traced relational ontology to indigenous ways of knowing (Ingold, 2006; Kimmerer, 2013; Todd, 2016). In my own attempts to reclaim OAE pedagogy from colonial structures, it would be a mistake to credit western Euro-centric thinking with insights that arise from relational theories. As Todd has challenged, "[Euro-centric theorists] unconsciously avoid engaging with contemporary indigenous scholars and thinkers while we engage instead with eighty year old ethnographic texts or two hundred year old philosophical tomes" (Todd, 2016, p. 8).

It is my intent, then, to discuss relational ontology that arises out of North American indigenous scholarship. In doing so, I recognize there are associated risks—

namely, that of tokenizing and/or misappropriating the intellectual work of indigenous scholars. In my acknowledgement of these risks, I also acknowledge myself as a white, Euro-centric female who is unable to fully embody indigenous ontological frameworks without significant deconstruction and a willingness to question and unravel aspects of my own identity. And, while I may reference western European scholars, I recognize that many of them have not acknowledged the significant work of marginalized populations, including the rigorous body of knowledge produced by Inuit and indigenous thought leaders on relational ontology. To the degree I have access, I make every effort in the following discourse to reference the works of these Inuit and indigenous scholars.

There is additional risk in discussing relationality in generalized, globalized terms, particularly when it comes to human and more-than-human relations. Relationality is highly localized and the dynamics change over space and time (Haber, 2009; Baltus, 2018). I am not attempting here to suggest *one* ontology. Rather, I acknowledge a *plurality of ontologies* and multiple ways of perceiving reality. Western European thought has tended to favor substance-based ontology over alternatives, which in turn leads to a dualistic *either-or* approach. What I am suggesting is a *both-and*, non-dualistic embracing of multiple perceptions as a way to recognize the complexities of reality.

5.2.1 Indigenous Place-Thought

As noted earlier, western ontologies only acknowledge humans as possessing agency. Humans are the actors on the stage; the more-than-human world provides a backdrop for the unfolding drama of society and culture. According to many theorists, much of what we perceive regarding the agency of humans and the more-than-human world can be traced back to our cosmological narratives (Kimmerer, 2013; Watts, 2013). Kimmerer states, “Like Creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are. We are inevitably shaped by them no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 7). Watts contends strongly that ontological foundations must begin from a perspective of indigenous cosmology as being founded in truth rather than myth. “The difference in a Haudenosaunee or Anishnaabe framework is that our cosmological

frameworks are not an abstraction but rather a literal and animate extension of Sky Woman's and First Woman's thoughts" (2013, p. 22).

The two competing narratives that drive much of western thinking cosmologically are the Judeo-Christian story of creation and the Darwinian theory of evolution. While these narratives differ greatly and provide much fodder for controversy, both propose a version of cosmology that places humans at the top of the food chain and/or evolutionary process. While the theory of evolution comes closer by acknowledging the *potential* for non-human agency, that potential is only realized through a slow process of mutation and natural selection, based on competition and survival of the fittest.

By contrast, indigenous "Place-Thought is the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (Watts, 2013, p. 21). Rooted in indigenous cosmologies, Place-Thought recognizes the role of Sky Woman as a co-creator, accepting gifts from the non-human entities she encounters and, in gratitude for these gifts, singing and dancing the world into existence (Kimmerer, 2013).

> When Sky Woman falls from the sky and lies on the back of a turtle, she is not only able to create land but becomes territory itself. Therefore, Place-Thought is an extension of her circumstance, desire, and communication with the water and animals – her agency. Through this communication she is able to become the basis by which all future societies will be built upon – land (Watts, 2013, p. 23).

Indigenous Place-Thought opens the door for the agency of the more-than-human world, and also places humans *within* the world as equal players (Baires, 2018). Non-human agents play a role in the development of society, are part of that society, and act as agents in creating and maintaining that society. Phenomenologically, from the perspective of Place-Thought, humans are no longer the agentic beings who theorize *about* the world. Instead, there is opportunity for humans to think *with* the more-than-human world and to consider the relational dynamics that make up the lifeworld of humans and non-humans alike.

Vanessa Watts says it this way, “Our truth, not only Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee people but in a majority of Indigenous societies, conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil. The land is understood to be female: First Woman designates the beginning of the animal world, the plant world and human beings” (Watts, 2013, p. 27). Stemming from cosmology and place-narratives, the non-human world plays an integral role in society, sharing in its creation.

5.2.2 Kincentric ecology

Enrique Salmón of the Rarámuri people of the Sierra Madres region in Chihuahua, Mexico acknowledges the linguistic poverty of the modern English language, recognizing that translating certain indigenous concepts related to human relationships with the more-than-human world is simply not possible (Salmón, 2000). To address this, Salmón suggests the language of Kincentric Ecology to recognize the degree to which, “Indigenous people in North America are aware that life in any environment is viable only when humans view their surroundings as kin; that their mutual roles are essential for their survival” (2000, p. 1327). Salmón discusses the ways in which this notion, which is meant to mirror the Rarámuri concept of *iwígara,* is embedded in Rarámuri life through ceremonies, rituals, and language that continuously reinforce the “interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madres, physical and spiritual” (2000, p. 1328).

Salmón’s concept of Kincentric Ecology takes the idea of relationship a step further by equating human relationships to the natural world with family. For the Rarámuri, the relationship “is not one of wonder, but of familiarity” (2000, p. 1329). It is this concept of family, derived in part from their cosmology (the Ramámuri creation narrative suggests that humans emerged into the world from the ears of corn), that influences the Ramámuri’s sense of responsibility and obligation to the natural world.

Through these various concepts of indigenous ways of knowing, we can see that relationship plays a key role in both indigenous thought and identity. Relationships between entities carry ontological significance and are connected to the identity of humans and places. These relationships are considered familial, requiring action that stems from a sense of responsibility and care. While cosmologies across indigenous

people groups vary, there is a shared belief "that all life shares the same breath. We are all related to, and play a role in, the complexity of life" (Salmón, 2000, p. 1328).

5.3 Regenerative reclamation

In previous chapters much of my discourse has been concentrated around human relationships with the more-than-human world based on the writings of white, male, Euro-western thinkers—specifically Martin Buber and Immanuel Kant. Here I acknowledge the philosophical baggage that accompanies the works of many of these scholars, and also suggest ways in which their ideas can be reclaimed under the umbrella of relationality and ontological pluralism. I am not suggesting a reclamation that involves simply applying a label of relational ontology or misappropriating indigenous theories as some sort of 'easy fix.' Rather, I recognize a need for the hard work of dismantling Euro-western colonialism, privilege, and white supremacy that is often at the heart of these onto-epistemological assumptions.

So, while acknowledging problematic ideology that often lies at the heart of Euro-western philosophy, I'd also like to suggest that there are nuggets that can be extracted from these ideals and repurposed within new frameworks. And by 'new' I don't mean to ignore the many centuries of indigenous narratives and scholarship that has been conducted around relational ontology. 'New' here is instead a new construction. In a similar vein to dismantling Euro-western dualisms and acknowledging ontological pluralism, I'd like to suggest that there is a possibility for Euro-western and indigenous ideas to come together in a synergistic and collaborative way, one that is honest about historical (and current) violence[16] that has been enacted on both humans and the more-than-human but also is solutions-focused and regenerative.

5.4 Summary

To summarize, it is not my intent to suggest a duality of ontologies or a need to make a complete shift from a substance-based ontology to a relational ontology. I'd

[16] This violence includes but is not limited to the forcible removal of Indigenous people from their historic homelands; the erasure of Indigenous thought, culture, and language through forced assimilation and genocide; violent extraction techniques, such as clear-cutting and mountaintop removal mining; and monoculture farming that uses harmful pesticides, herbicides, and GMO's.

rather like to suggest a plurality of ontologies as a framework to ground our epistemology and our values. We have gained much knowledge as a civilization from substance-based ontology and reductionistic experimentation—knowledge that has helped us understand our world in a pragmatic way. However, this knowledge if left to itself has the potential to result in a manipulation of the features of a substance to serve human needs and ends. Recognizing relational ontology as an additional lens through which to view reality helps to ground our values in reciprocity and responsibility. Acknowledging both substance and relationship as ontologically primary in a synergistic and dynamic relation opens the door to epistemologically access both the sublime and I-You encounters. A substance ontology allows us to acknowledge the individual identities of the relevant features of an encounter as independent and autonomous, and a relational ontology allows us to conceive of the interaction between substances and the resulting impact on both entities.

Part 3: Integration & Application

> *Over the years, one comes to measure a place, too, not just for the beauty it may give, the balminess of its breezes, the insouciance and relaxation it encourages, the sublime pleasures it offers, but for what it teaches. The way in which it alters our perception of the human. It is not so much that you want to return to indifferent or difficult places, but that you want to not forget (Lopez, 1999, pp. 71–72).*

This section integrates the theoretical analysis from the previous three chapters into a conceptual model I'm calling *primary encounters.* Chapter 6 provides a comparison of the features of an I-You encounter and a sublime experience and then suggests ways these two phenomena might combine to produce a primary encounter. Chapter 7 uses data from autoethnography to both illustrate and test the concept of primary encounters. Chapter 8 discusses application of the model, suggesting ways primary encounters might be integrated into OAE pedagogy and how this impacts perceptions of place and adventure from a relational ontology.

Chapter 6: Primary Encounters

The previous section hinted at some of the phenomenological similarities (and differences) between I-You encounters and experiences of the natural sublime. This chapter serves to integrate experiences of the natural sublime, Buber's I-You encounter, and relational ontology to produce a conceptual model I'm calling *primary encounters.* This model serves as a way to recognize a certain mode of relating with the more-than-human world that has the potential to intrinsically drive pro-environmental behaviours by developing virtues of humility, respect, and care. I begin by summarizing the phenomenological features of the natural sublime and I-You encounters, suggesting 6 overarching features that these two lived experiences have in common. After discussing these features and the ways in which they intersect, I describe how they work together to produce a conceptual model called a *primary encounter*. I suggest 4 key features of a primary encounter, and then discuss how these manifest themselves through a lived experience, providing an illustration from environmental literature to suggest how this concept might play out practically. Finally, I suggest the implications primary encounters has on human constructions of a sense of place and the use of adventure in education.

6.1 Integrating sublime experiences and I-You encounters

Chapters 3 & 4 provided a conceptual analysis of Marin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and the phenomenon of the sublime in nature. The analysis of Buber's philosophy in chapter 3 revealed a relational reciprocity at the core if I-You encounters and an ontology rooted in metaphysical holism. The quality of relationship that emerges from an I-You encounter inspires a semiotic construction (construction arising from meaning) that is not instrumental, resulting in a call to responsibility born out of love and compassion. Buber's philosophy centres relations as primary, recognizing the ways in which a certain mode of relating impacts both knowledge construction and ethical response. As discussed in chapter 5, this runs contrary to Euro-western ontologies that view substances as primary.

Robert Clewis (2019b) summarized the phenomenological features of the natural sublime that have been described by philosophers from ancient to modern philosophy, which was discussed in chapter 4. My analysis of the sublime added insights from contemporary philosophy, including contributions from Emily Brady and Jay Roberts. Clewis's summary of the literature highlights the transcendental nature of the sublime, the changed self, and a sense of oneness with the world that results from cognitive faculties being overwhelmed. Brady discusses these things and adds a connection from aesthetics to ethics that begins with humility and leads to a sense of respect and care. Roberts notes the temporary nature of sublime experiences and suggests that these experiences typically occur in some distant landscape away from home.

Chapter 5 explored the role of relational ontology, stemming from indigenous scholars, as a way to satisfy some of the philosophical problems that exist when suggesting a theory of the sublime. I suggested metaphysical imagination with a relationally-oriented ontology as a solution to some of the epistemological worries these theories invoke and proposed metaphysical imagination as a way to construction meaning from a relationally-oriented ontology.

These features of I-You encounters and experiences of the natural sublime are summarized in Table 1 below. Comparing the features reveals several common themes: metaphysical holism, temporary erasure of space-time boundaries, contribution to identity, a sense of meaning that is not instrumental, different relationships developing with the other, and the resulting formation of certain virtues. My suggestion of a new conceptual model of primary encounters arises out of these common phenomenological features, which offer insight into a way of relating with the more-than-human world that has not previously been explored within OAE. Moving towards this model, a discussion of these commonalities—including the way they slightly differ—will help to provide the aspects that might make up a primary encounter.

Table 1: A comparison of the features of the sublime and I-You encounters

Phenomenological Features	The Sublime	I-You Encounters
Metaphysical holism	- Metaphysically transcendent (Brady, Clewis) - Sense of oneness with the word (Wordsworth, Schopenhauer)	- Metaphysical holism & embodied oneness (Buber, p. 58) - Connection to the "Innate You" (Buber, p. 78-79)
Erasure of space-time boundaries	- Temporary (Roberts) - Rising above, release of everyday concerns (Kant) - Loss of self-consciousness (Emerson, Thoreau)	- Temporary (Buber, p. 68-69, 84-85) - Unplanned, unexpected (Buber, p. 62)
Contribution to identity	- Resurgence of self that has been changed (Kant)	- Self-consciousness changes to include the other in holism (Buber, p. 58, 111-112)
A sense of meaning that is not instrumental	- Stretching, expansion of mental faculties (Aikin, Addison, Priestley) - *Has no instrumental purpose, is not causal (implied)*	- Has no instrumental purpose, is not causal (Buber, p. 62, 100)
Relationship to the other	- Participation in the power or vastness of the other (Mendelssohn, Wordsworth)	- Introduces reciprocity (Buber, p. 58, 67)
Resulting Virtues	- Humility, respect, and care (Brady)	- Love, responsibility (Buber, 66)

The features in Table 1 intertwine and are interrelated, making it difficult to discuss them in isolation from each other. I summarize them below by discussing this interrelatedness and providing evidence from secondary sources.

6.1.1 Metaphysical holism and identity

Both experiences of the sublime and I-You encounters open awareness to the metaphysical dimension, which challenges our perceptions of space and time. For experiences of the sublime, this often comes as a result of being overwhelmed mentally. Our inability to comprehend the vastness, grandness, and/or power of the other makes the other feel unknowable, and yet there is also a feeling of being connected to the other—drawn in—resulting in an awareness of ***metaphysical holism***. Wordsworth describes it this way, "For whatever suspends the comparing power of the mind and possesses it with a feeling or image of intense unity, without conscious contemplation of parts, has produced that state of the mind which is the consummation of the sublime" (2019, p. 178). Arthur Schopenhauer, in discussing the differences between the beautiful and the sublime, notes that unique to the sublime is the feeling of being elevated and aware of something above normal consciousness (Schopenhauer, 2019). As noted earlier, Hepburn suggests metaphysical imagination as being part of experiences of the sublime, helping us make sense of something that is beyond our ability to comprehend (Hepburn, 1996). Metaphysical imagination helps us to see reality as a whole, recognizing a sense of oneness and connection that exists beyond the realm of substance.

The concept of ***identity*** assumes some level of self-consciousness, an awareness of our presence in space and time. We've seen, however, the ways in which both the natural sublime and I-You encounters impact our sense of self. In the case of the natural sublime, I noted earlier some various perspectives related to self-consciousness. For Thoreau (and Emerson to a degree), engaging with the natural sublime required a sense of being disembodied as a result of mental and rational faculties being overwhelmed (Black, 1994). Ralph Black recounts Thoreau's experience of climbing Mount Katahdin and his eventual inability to describe the landscape with language or metaphorical imagery, resorting to simply a cry of "Contact! Contact!" (1994, p. 69). For these

authors, the effect the sublime had on self-consciousness was a result of, in Wordsworth's words, feelings of "intense unity" (2019, p. 180).

Both Schopenhauer and Kant acknowledge the erasure of the self as part of the experience of the sublime. Schopenhauer describes it this way,

> When we lose ourselves in the contemplation of the infinite extent of the world in space and time… then we feel ourselves reduced to nothing, feel ourselves as individuals, as living bodies, a transient appearances of the will, like drops in the ocean, fading away, melting away into nothing (as quoted in Shapshay, 2018).

Robert Clewis references Schopenhauer when he refers to a "sense of oneness with the world," and, quoting Schopenhauer, "…we are one with the world, and are therefore not oppressed but exalted by its immensity" (2019b, p. 349). And so, the effect upon our self-consciousness is a kind of ***erasure of boundaries,*** a metaphysical unity in which our perceptions of space and time are conceived of *with* our environment, sharing the same space and time. Kant connects this to morality as a way to save ourselves from nihilistic despair, with a sort of call to action.

Buber also references the perception of the self as a unique feature of an I-You encounter. Rather than a disembodiment, however, Buber describes a new awareness of self as being *with* the You. Consider the following:

> Similarly, there are innumerable occasions when I is only an indispensable pronoun, only a necessary abbreviation for "This one there who is speaking." But self-consciousness? If one sentence truly intends the You of a relation and the other one the It of an experience, and if the I in both sentences is thus intended in truth, do both sentences issue from the same self-consciousness? The I of the basic word I-You is different from that of the basic word I-It. (Buber, 1970, p. 111).

Buber continues from here with a description of the differences between the 'I' in these two different modes of experience. In the I-It mode, he describes the 'I' as an

'ego'.[17] A few sentences later he elaborates, "Egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos. Persons appear by entering into relation to other persons…. The purpose of setting oneself apart is to experience and use… The purpose of relation is the relation itself—touching the You" (1970, pp. 111–112).

Whereas discussions of the sublime in Romantic literature and modern philosophy focus on a disembodied self followed by a re-emergence of self with a new awareness of self as insignificant and/or vulnerable—a humility in the face of something immense, powerful, or incomprehensible—Buber's description of a transcended self focuses on relation. In the former, the self is absorbed by the immensity of the other—cast away as insignificant. In the latter, "The person becomes conscious of himself [sic] as participating in being, as being-with, and thus as a being" (Buber, 1970, p. 113). The result is a change in ***identity*** that includes elements of the other in ***reciprocal relationship***.

Buber is careful to differentiate his notion of a changed or transcended self with other, similar notions. He discusses one example from Eastern mysticism and the doctrine of immersion, where we descend into a lack of consciousness and therefore enter into a kind of unity. Buber discusses this and notes that one cannot actually live this way because it leads to annihilation of the 'I'. By contrast, Buber's encounter allows for the 'I' and the 'You' to retain their respective identities (1970, p. 141).

I argue that, while descriptions of sublime experiences and Buber's encounter both reference a kind of ***metaphysical holism***, the phenomenology—the perception—of this holism is different. In the former case, holism is described as an almost full erasure of the perception of self. The self, as an autonomous individual, no longer exists but is absorbed by the whole. In Buber's account, the self remains autonomous but recognizes the mutual autonomy of the You. ***Metaphysical holism*** for Buber is a

[17] Walter Kaufmann, the translator for this particular edition of Buber's work, includes a lengthy footnote here on the translation from the German *Eigenwesen* (1970, p. 111, note 7). Buber was unhappy with the initial translation, 'individuality' as it did not quite get at the meaning he intended. In a note to the editors, he suggested "egotical being" as something closer to his meaning, but this was ultimately changed to 'ego.' Different than Freud's meaning of the word 'ego', Buber is trying to express an individual's perception of self as reflected by an experience or encounter.

transcended version of both the I and the You—a mutual acknowledgment of the ***reciprocal relation*** that transcends substance.

6.1.2 Erasure of space-time boundaries

The previous discussion around metaphysical holism challenges our perception of space. We also see ways in which the natural sublime and I-You encounters challenge our perception of time. The loss or changes in self-consciousness described above imply a perceived suspension of time.

And so, while there are differences, both the natural sublime and I-You encounters share an experience of a transcended self and changing perceptions related to space and time. There is a sense in which both involve an ***erasure of space-time boundaries,*** or our perception of boundaries. For the moment of the encounter, both subjects acknowledge their shared space and time in a holistic and metaphysical transcendence.

The erasure of boundaries—particularly as described by experiences of the sublime—results in a type of existential crisis that can only be temporary or it threatens to consume our sense of self. As Roberts states, "Sublime experiences are never constant or ever present—the feelings they evoke are always temporary" (2018, p. 26). Similarly, Buber also notes the temporary nature of an I-You encounter,

> Genuine contemplation never lasts long; the natural being that only now revealed itself to me in the mystery of reciprocity has again become describable, analyzable, classifiable—the point at which manifold systems of law intersect. And even love cannot persist in direct relation; it endures, but only in the alternation of actuality and latency…. Every You in the world is doomed by its nature to become a thing or at least to enter into thinghood again and again (1970, pp. 68–69).

And yet, for Buber, this is an iterative process. While an encounter may be momentary, it is also something that can occur "again and again." In addition, these encounters are unplanned; they come as a surprise. "The You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking" (1970, p. 62).

6.1.3 Relationship to the other and resulting virtues

Clewis suggests that experiences of the natural sublime have a unique phenomenological effect on us through a perceived invitation to participate. Citing Wordsworth and Mendelssohn in confirmation of this phenomenon, Clewis states, "the pleasure in the sublime comes from sharing in the 'perfections' of the object, such as its magnitude or power. In so doing, we become part of something larger or grander than ourselves" (2019b, p. 351). Thus, experiences of the sublime are often reflexive in nature. Brady suggests another source in Hepburn, who states that we are "involved in the natural situation itself…both actor and spectator, ingredient in the landscape… playing actively with nature, and letting nature, as it were, play with me and my sense of self" (as quoted in Brady, 2012b, p. 363).

Brady further connects sublime experiences with the concept of mystery, leading the observer to an experience of humility and respect. This creates an aesthetic-moral relationship that has the potential to ignite a sense of responsibility to the natural environment. "The sublime potentially affords aesthetic responses that throw up epistemic value too, in which we grasp nature as something that cannot be appropriated and something that, after all, deserves respect" (2012b, p. 364). In other words, the sublime highlights the intrinsic value of the natural world, garnering an attitude of respect. Brady further implies that this respect has the potential to lead towards care and a virtue-oriented ethic towards the more-than-human world.

Buber also makes these connections, though Buber pushes the relational boundaries beyond reflexivity to reciprocity. For Buber, this is one of the key features of an I-You encounter. The nature of the relationship is reciprocal, and this, in turn, leads to a mutual love (1970).

As mentioned previously, Buber's work mostly concerns human relationships with other humans. But in the afterward of his book he addresses some of the nuances related to encounters with the more-than-human world. Specifically, Buber addresses how reciprocity is achieved by our interactions with nature. He acknowledges the question: since nature is not able to say "I-You" in the way that a fellow human can, how do we receive something from the encounter? What is the reciprocity?

When we interact with the animal kingdom, Buber asserts that animals do have a rudimentary ability to recognize us as 'other' and to respond in that way. He uses the example of humans having tamed certain animals. While they cannot respond at the same level as another human, Buber calls the response that they can give to us "the threshold of mutuality."

Regarding plants and other parts of nature that are not of the animal kingdom, Buber's assertion here is that the reciprocity happens as we enter into the encounter in authenticity, ready to receive. "We find here not the deed of posture of an individual being but a reciprocity of being itself—a reciprocity that has nothing except being." (173). In other words, the reciprocity that comes from the tree is the fact of the tree's existence.

> Our habits of thought make it difficult for us to see that in such cases something is awakened by our attitude and flashes toward us from that which has being. What matters in this sphere is that we should do justice with an open mind to the actuality that opens up before us (1970, p. 173).

What he does not address here, using the example of the tree… what do we give to the tree? We can recognize that there is something to be gained, particularly in a spiritual sense, *from* the tree. But what does the tree gain from us? Is it changed?

Perhaps this is where the action comes in. What the tree gains from us is not something that necessarily happens in that moment, but something that comes much later as we begin to act on what we perceive is an authentic relationship. What are we to do with that? An encounter must evolve into an ethic of care and compassion. The tree receives this over time as the human begins to learn (now moving into an 'It' relationship) what the tree needs to thrive. As Buber states, "Love is a responsibility of an I for a You" (1970, p. 66).

The humility that generates respect and care, the reciprocity of encounter that leads to love and responsibility, these are reminiscent of indigenous Place-Thought and Salmón's discussion of a Kinship Ecology (Salmón, 2000). Primary encounters are first material, but they eventually must enter into the realm of meaning and thus be constructed mentally and socially. The way in which these encounters are constructed depends on the philosophical plumbing that is in place. From a substance-based ontology, our tendency is to focus on the thing rather than on the invisible relational

dynamics that move in between. I argue that shifting our ontological structures and recognizing these relational dynamics through metaphysical imagination has the potential to shift both our identity and our values.

6.2 Primary encounters: a conceptual model

The section above placed experiences of the natural sublime side-by-side with I-You encounters to explore common themes—and recognize some differences—that exist within these phenomena. Here I move towards a new conceptual model that synthesizes these features into a phenomenon I'm calling *primary encounters.* This phenomenon inputs features of sublime experiences into Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue to suggest a way of relating with the more-than-human world that stems from indigenous ontologies based in relationality. The word 'primary' is used to acknowledge the phenomenon as being material, *a priori*. The word 'encounter' summons an I-You mode-of relating/existence and all that this entails.

6.2.1 The features of a primary encounter

Drawing on the comparison outlined above, I suggest four features that encapsulate the phenomenon of a primary encounter:

1. An experience of metaphysical holism, which includes;
2. A temporary and unexpected erasure of space-time boundaries, which leads to;
3. An adoption of relational reciprocity which:
    - Recognizes the agency of the other and,
    - Embraces a piece of shared identity with the other;
4. Resulting in virtues of humility, respect, and care that inspires behaviours stemming from a sense of responsibility for the other.

These features interact as part of a phenomenological process, which is further outlined below.

One key overarching meta-feature that encompasses the others is the non-instrumental nature of the encounter. The experience of a primary encounter is not something that can be sought after for the purpose of utility or instrumental value. Rather, it happens unexpectedly, is not causally determined, resulting in constitutive

value. As Simon James has argued, "some natural entities have value for us on account of the fact that they are parts of certain meaningful wholes" (2019, p. 12). In the case of a primary encounter, our experience of metaphysical holism *constitutes* valuation of the more-than-human world, which is experienced intrinsically. The meaning associated with a primary encounter, then, does not come from utility or causality. It is inherent within the encounter itself, a semiosis that communicates agency and intrinsic value.

6.2.2 The process of a primary encounter

Having identified phenomenological features of a primary encounter, I now suggest a conceptual model for how these features might play out as a process (Figure 2).

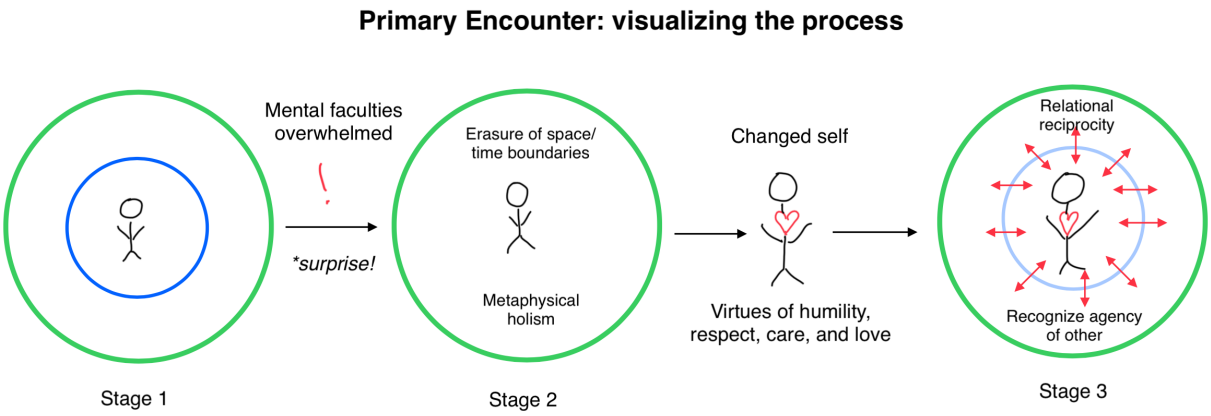

Figure 2: Primary encounter as a process

Stage 1

Stage 1 represents what we might consider to be a "normal" mode of relating to the more-than-human world, an I-It mode of relating. Metaphysically, humans interact with their environment in ways that acknowledge a difference in how other objects[18] within the environment relate to space and time. While our interactions may involve sharing the same general location at the same general time, there are certain boundaries at play. For example, if I sit next to a tree to eat my lunch, I have a

[18] I'm using the word 'object' here for clarity of reading, but I recognize that earlier acknowledgements of the agency of elements within the more-than-human world challenge the use of this word. Whereas 'subject' might be more appropriate, the text will reveal the ways in which an object becomes subject through a primary encounter.

subconscious awareness of the tree's presence, but I recognize the tree as being bounded by the features of its substance. I perceive the tree as other, having its own spatial boundaries as I have mine.

I am also subconsciously aware that the tree exists in a different state of time. My perception of time is impacted by the past, the present, and my assumptions about the future. The past and future continually intermingle to influence the present. For instance, I'm currently thinking that I will soon go for a walk. This assumption impacts the amount of attention I give to the present moment. We do not know how a tree perceives time, or if it perceives time at all.

Having separate space/time boundaries allows for I-It modes of relating, recognizing the other as 'object'. I can analyse the tree, measure it, reduce it to smaller parts to better understand the whole. I can do this objectively because I am a separate entity, with my own (different) space and time.

Moment of surprise

Primary encounters are unplanned occurrences. When they happen, they are often unexpected. The initial feature of a primary encounter involves a feeling of being overwhelmed. My mental faculties are unable to conceive of the vastness before me; I cannot make sense cognitively of what I am experiencing phenomenologically.

Stage 2

In stage 2 the unexpected feeling of being mentally overwhelmed leads me into a state where my previous perception of space/time boundaries is suspended. I become aware of something that connects me with the other—that which Buber referred to as 'the Innate You' (1970), the Hasidic Jews refer to as 'Shekinah' (Blenkinsop, 2005), and the Inuit refer to as 'Sila,' the breath that connects life (Todd, 2016). I suggest that part of what is happening during this stage is a temporary acknowledgement of relations as primary. The erasure of space/time boundaries represents a willingness to briefly let go of the primacy of substance. Multiple ontologies are at play as my normal perceptions of space and time are challenged.

The experience of metaphysical holism and the erasure of space/time boundaries are mutually dependent. In stage two, the curtain of boundaries is

momentarily pulled back to unite both subjects[19] in holism. There is a new awareness of the relations between the I and the You, working in harmony with substance.

A changed self

The experience in stage 2 changes the meanings I ascribe to the entities involved in the encounter. As discussed previously and outlined in Raffan's research (1993), the meanings we ascribe to things are connected to our identity. The primary encounter produces a constitutive valuing of the other (part of a meaningful whole), resulting in a sense of meaning that is semiotic and not connected to utility. When we give something meaning from an I-You perspective, we recognize that entity as contributing to our overall sense of self. The meaning connects person and place in a piece of shared identity. Humility and respect intermingle to move us towards a stance of empathy and care.

Stage 3

Primary encounters are temporary. I cannot remain in a state of metaphysical holism without completely losing myself in the process—my metaphysical boundaries and individuality. In Buber's words, it would "consume us" (1970, pp. 84–85). As described previously, Buber is careful to acknowledge that an encounter does not require a full loss of self-consciousness. However, the encounter does change us. The awareness of relational ontology, of metaphysical holism, and the connection to identity leads to a reciprocity. Primary encounters help us to become aware of the reciprocal nature of relations, and the effects that all entities have on one another. The experience of humility and respect in light of the encounter further develop virtues of love and care, which leads to a sense of responsibility.

Stage 3 represents this changed self and an awareness of the relations that transcend the boundaries of substance. Primary encounters, acknowledged and welcomed as such, change us in ways that result in new ontological postures. While our perceptions of space and time return to understanding ourselves as distinct substances, we have a new awareness of the relational dynamics that pulse under the surface of substance, uniting us in reciprocity with place and the more-than-human world.

[19] Here I acknowledge that what was an 'object' in my realm of perception is now recognized as a 'subject', having agency.

6.3 Illustrating a primary encounter

Annie Dillard's essay "Living Like Weasels" provides a vivid illustration of the movement from stage one and into stage two outlined in this process of primary encounter. I offer a lengthy quote from the essay below, which will then be analysed from the conceptual model just defined:

> I startled a weasel who startled me, and we exchanged a long glance….The weasel was stunned into stillness as he was emerging from beneath an enormous shaggy wild-rose bush four feet away. I was stunned into stillness, twisted backward on the tree trunk. Our eyes locked, and someone threw away the key. Our look was as if two lovers, or deadly enemies, met unexpectedly on an overgrown path when each had been thinking of something else: a clearing blow to the gut. It was also a bright blow to the brain, or a sudden beating of brains, with all the charge and intimate grate of rubbed balloons. It emptied our lungs. It felled the forest, moved the fields, and drained the pond; the world dismantled and tumbled into that black hole of eyes…. He disappeared. This was only last week, and already I don't remember what shattered the enchantment. I think I blinked, I think I retrieved my brain from the weasel's brain, and tried to memorize what I was seeing, and the weasel felt the yank of separation, the careening splashdown into real life and the urgent current of instinct. He vanished under the wild rose. I waited motionless, my mind suddenly full of data and my spirit with pleadings, but he didn't return (1982, pp. 66–68).

Dillard first describes the initial moment of surprise, "I startled a weasel who startled me." In this example, both the I and the You are surprised simultaneously and succumb temporarily to a state of paralysis. Dillard rather poetically describes the sensation of her loss of mental faculties and metaphysical holism, "…it emptied our lungs. It felled the forest, moved the fields, and drained the pond…." The visual here erases substances, centring the relational dynamic between Dillard and the weasel as the dominating feature of the landscape. This relational dynamic is described vividly as "a bright blow to the brain… with all the charge and intimate grate of rubbed balloons."

Further in the essay, Dillard offers another description that hints at metaphysical holism and the erasure of space/time boundaries, "I tell you I've been in

that weasel's brain for sixty seconds, and he was in mine. Brains are private places, muttering through unique and secret tapes—but the weasel and I both plugged into another tape simultaneously, for a sweet and shocking time" (1982, p. 67).

Dillard describes the encounter as temporary, ending when Dillard attempts to make cognitive sense of what is happening ("…I retrieved my brain from the weasel's brain, and tried to memorize what I was seeing…"). Through this attempt to cognize what was happening, the I-You encounter morphed into an I-It experience, "shatter[ing] the enchantment" and centring both Dillard and the weasel into the normal, substance-based boundaries of space and time.

Dillard describes the ways in which this encounter with the weasel led her to learn about how weasels live—what drives them instinctually. She also seems to ascribe agency to the weasel, calling the weasel 'him' rather than 'It' and suggesting that the weasel was just as involved in the encounter—mentally and emotionally—as Dillard herself. There is a kind of reciprocity evident here, and while it's not written about in detail in this essay, Dillard's writing in general demonstrates a deep humility and respect for the more-than-human world.

6.4 Primary encounters in the context of outdoor adventure education

While the concept of primary encounters has the potential to impact many spheres of human experience, my intent in this thesis is to address the phenomenon within the context of outdoor adventure education. In chapter 2 I suggested that the onto-epistemological assumptions and historical/cultural influences that guided the development of OAE resulted in an adversarial relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. After exploring these foundations, I discussed the ways in which humans construct a sense of place, referencing the research of anthropologists, geographers, and eco-psychologists. This discussion resulted in conclusions that we construct a sense of place through the meanings we attribute to place and the ways we perceive place as connecting to our identity.

Returning to some of these concepts, I argue here that the phenomenon of primary encounters, within the context of outdoor adventure education, enables a new construction of place that allows the more-than-human world to play a role in these constructions.

6.4.1 Constructions of place through primary encounters

Raffan's research, discussed in chapter 2, concludes that human conflicts over land do not stem from how land ought to be used, but instead what land *means* (1993). His ethnographic study revealed differences in place constructions resulting from the ways in which different human cultures interact with the land. Raffan explored the connections to place from the perspective of three different cultures within the Thelon Game Sanctuary: the Caribou Inuit of Qamanittuaq, the Chipewyan Dene of Lutsel K'e, and Euro-Canadians. Summarizing what he labeled a 'numinous' connection to the land, Raffan states,

> In the most profound bonds to place I encountered—and these were encountered in all three cultural groups—there was an at times overwhelming sense of inadequacy in words alone to convey the essential nature of what people were trying to convey. Numinous connections to place were all that is awe-inspiring, all that transcends the rational, all that touches the heart more than the mind, all that goes beyond names, stories, and experiences yet still plays a significant role in the bond that links people and places (1993, p. 44).

Raffan's research, using ethnography, arrives at this numinous connection by highlighting themes that convey a spiritual connection or experience of transcendence. As noted above, many of these were expressed symbolically (through songs, poems, rituals, etc) due to the inadequacy of words to describe these kinds of connections.

In the preceding chapters, similar themes have emerged in my development of primary encounters. In chapter 3, I acknowledged Buber's use of poetic language and word-play to describe a relational dimension that traditional language is unable to adequately communicate. In chapter 4, I discussed the philosophical tension that exists when trying to theorize about the sublime; something that is determined to be 'transcendent' cannot be known epistemologically since it extends the boundaries of mental capacity. Further, I experienced the inadequacy of words myself through exploring my own relationships with place (explored more in the following chapter).[20]

[20] This limitation of language is also referenced in chapter 10 related to the pilot study I conducted in 2019.

Where Raffan identified a particular type of connection he called numinous (along with three others), I've taken this a step further by outlining the phenomenological features that constitute this kind of connection and how these features work together through a process. Raffan notes numinous connections being some of the strongest bonds to place and that these strong bonds constitute "an existential definition of self" (1993, p. 45). Reinforcing Raffan's research, the concept of primary encounters reveals the ways in which place becomes part of the self through metaphysical holism and relationality. Through primary encounters, sense of place goes further than being *in* place to suggest being *with* place, *part of* place.

6.4.2 The role of adventure in primary encounters

In chapter 2, I provided a brief historical account detailing the emergence of outdoor adventure as an educational tool. This survey highlighted the use of adventure in developing personal and social growth and addressing various 'social ills' identified in the early 1900s. I argued that OAE was founded upon adversarial relationships with the more-than-human world, stemming from a highly militaristic construction of relationship that pitted humans against nature in an attempt to provide a 'moral equivalent to war.'

This accounting of OAE naturally leads to questioning the value of utilising adventure for educational purposes. Perhaps adventure should be abandoned altogether in favor of educational pedagogies that address ecological relationships, such as environmental education and ecotourism (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2022). While such arguments have merit, I suggest that this approach is shortsighted. The problem is not in adventure itself; rather, it's a result of our ontological structures which drive epistemological application.

I argue instead for a re-imagining of adventure as an educational tool. Adopting new ontologies helps to reframe adventure by breaking down dualisms and hierarchical relationships between humans and the more-than-human world. Further, there are qualities inherent in adventure that have potential to initiate a primary encounter. For example, one aspect inherent in adventure is the role of uncertainty. Adventure does not guarantee a certain outcome, and those who willingly engage in adventure adopt this mindset of uncertainty. This openness to various outcomes relinquishes a measure

of control to the environment in which the adventure unfolds, allowing the environment to play a larger role in the experience. Such an openness provides an initial step in acknowledging the other(s) and entering into metaphysical holism, and embracing uncertainty allows space for surprise encounters to interrupt the experience.

I will unpack this more in chapters 7 & 8, but for now it's worth noting that, with new ontological postures, adventure has the potential to shed problematic relational constructions and create new relational constructions through the concept of primary encounters.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has synthesized the analysis from the previous three chapters into a new conceptual model, *primary encounters,* suggesting a particular mode of relating that is possible on a material level. I suggest 4 features of a primary encounter which follow a three-stage process, impacting personal identity in ways that lead to relational reciprocity and virtues of humility, respect, and care. An essay from Annie Dillard illustrates the process and provides a practical application of the model. The implications for sense of place constructions and OAE pedagogy were also explored. In the following chapter I use autoethnographic data to further illustrate and test the concept of primary encounters.

Chapter 7: Examples from Autoethnography

In the introduction, I provided a vignette detailing what I would consider to be a primary encounter with a corner lot in Northern California. In order to both illustrate and test the idea of a primary encounter—how this might manifest itself, under what conditions, etc—the aim of this chapter is to explore encounters from my own experiences and then to reflexively analyse them through the framework just presented. Given that the notion of a primary encounter suggests the phenomenon is initially material (something that occurs to us without constructs), if this concept is worthy of attention we need to learn how to recognize what's happening. And upon recognition, we need to learn what this means and how it might change our relationships with the more-than-human world in ways that cultivate mutual flourishing. The following discussion highlights the conditions that contribute to primary encounter occurrences, leading towards potential pedagogical application.

7.1 Three vignettes

Through the process of analysing the data from autoethnography (see chapter 10 for more on the methodology this entailed), I identified themes that were representative of the features of a primary encounter. Here I offer those themes by way of three vignettes, each describing a relational encounter with a different part of the more-than-human world—The Oak, The River, and The Sky. After describing the phenomena as I experienced them, I discuss the conditions that contributed to these encounters and analyse each vignette through the lens of the conceptual model to determine whether or not these experiences from my own past might be considered primary encounters.

7.1.1 The Oak

It started in 2012, the year I moved into the loft apartment on the corner of Sweetwater Lane. I was attracted to the place because of its solitude and because of the Oak. The massive tree—was it a blue oak, or a valley oak? I never knew—framed the building, its branches towering over the small deck of the 2nd story apartment. It commanded attention, and so I began my morning routine—waking with at least an

hour to spare, making my coffee, and sitting under the branches of the Oak. With no agenda, I simply gave her what I thought she[21] asked for—attention.

I did this for almost five years. At times I journaled, marking the changing of the seasons, as I did on March 15, 2015, "The brown of a week ago has transformed into a field of blue & yellow. Tiny wildflowers color the otherwise drab landscape, painting life, painting hope. The orange trees have begun to blossom. All around there are pictures of life renewed, life reborn out of the dark of winter" (Personal Journal). But mostly I simply absorbed my surroundings, watching the morning unfold, and taking in the life and energy that seemed to radiate from the Oak. For those few moments, life slowed down. My daily agendas vanished, and nothing mattered except being present in the moment.

The Oak connected me to others—the scrub jay, looking for peanuts; the titmouse, who preferred sunflower seeds; the squirrel, taunting me from high branches; the ants, following a trail of pheromones; and the ever-present Anna's hummingbird with his raspy mating call. For years I sat under her branches almost daily, with rare exceptions due to weather events, and watched life unfold amidst her branches.

I recall the day I decided to hang a bird feeder from the lowest of her branches where I would be able to see it from my kitchen window. Walking around her trunk it became painfully obvious that I would not be able to climb her. The Oak's bark was furrowed but smooth, with no options for footholds. Determined to hang my feeder, I rifled through my rock climbing gear and devised a solution using a rope, my ascenders, and a belay device. For the span of 15-20 minutes, the Oak held me, suspended from my rope and harness, as I attached a small eye bolt and a pulley. I remember having the distinct feeling that she approved of this, providing the migrating birds with food on

[21] Pronouns have become linguistic tools that extend beyond simple grammatical function. The use of a subjective pronoun (he/she/they) is an indication of agency, as evidenced by Buber's linguistic use of I-It vs. I-You. In the English language, pronouns also historically reference gender. My use of the pronouns 'she/her/hers' in reference to subjects of the more-than-human world is not meant to indicate gender. In the context of the more-than-human world, 'She/her/hers' can be read as agentic and non-gendered. An argument could be made for the use of 'they/their' as being more non-gendered. Because of the grammatical challenges these words present, I have chosen instead to use 'she/her/hers' pronouns for ease of reading.

their way through while she offered them much needed shelter. Together, we were offering a gift to these traveling creatures, sharing in the mutual joy of giving.

The Oak introduced me to neighbours I may never have known otherwise. And I sought to participate in the hospitality she provided—the shade, the rest, the food. Together we embraced the life of that small oak savannah. The morning the Oak fell, I was so grief-stricken I couldn't journal about it. All I have from that day are my memories, which are vivid. It felt like the entire ecosystem shook, the way that the ground shook when she fell. It was as if we all experienced the same sense of loss, and a collective grief settled on the corner lot at Sweetwater Lane.

Recently, I witnessed the loss of another tree, the victim of a vicious winter storm that wreaked havoc on holiday travel across the United States. The storm hit my part of the world with what felt like a vengeful violence, accompanied by strong winds and the most extreme drop in temperature I have ever witnessed. One of the lodgepole pines that stood tall next to my house did not survive this event. I came home to find it lying in the snow, having narrowly missed taking down three other trees.

While this loss of a member of my community saddened me, it did not strike me with the same measure of grief as the loss of the Oak. I did not have the same relationship with this Lodgepole; she was not my friend. Perhaps she could be considered an acquaintance, one with whom I occasionally interacted. But I never sat under her branches, never participated in the community she cultivated. Contemplating this relational difference led me to wonder why. What makes one tree a friend and another just an acquaintance? Are they not from the same biological kingdom, though different species? Do they not perform similar functions within their respective ecosystems?

I am reminded of Simon James's critique of a causal-instrumentalist valuation of the more-than-human world (James, 2019). The Oak's value to me was not causal. While she did play a key role in the ecosystem of that particular patch of California chaparral, my friendship with the Oak did not rest in her purpose or usefulness to me. In fact, the Oak (as well as the Lodgepole) could arguably be more useful to me in her deceased form. Indeed, both of these trees met the same post-mortem fate—hundreds of years' worth of the sun's energy translating into BTU's, keeping families warm on

cold winter nights. Knowing this, however, would not have stemmed the tide of my tears at the Oak's passing.

Reflexive analysis

As I explored the memories and writings related to this time with the Oak, the data revealed three factors that led to the quality of relationship I developed with this tree: aesthetics, observation, and time. Her aesthetic beauty struck me almost immediately. There were aspects of sublimity at play—awe mixed with some mathematical dissonance related to her immensity of size and age. Metaphysical imagination played a role here as I often contemplated her life, all the things she must have witnessed—the generations of children who played in her branches, the multitudes of birds and other creatures that took shelter in her crown over the years. There was an embodied nature to this aesthetic experience as well. My front porch was enmeshed in the Oak's branches, giving me the sensation of living amongst her other residents. The Oak provided my porch with coveted shade, but I had the sense that she sheltered me in other ways as well.

There was also a degree of intense observation that contributed to my friendship with the Oak, coupled with time. Given that I often sat before her with no agenda, I spent my time observing—the cracks in her bark, the shape of her branches, the abandoned woodpecker's nest that provided a home for starlings, the path the ants would take up her trunk, which leaves would turn first in the fall. Often I would lose track of time as I sat before the Oak, and a sort of embodied encounter would occur. I did not lose my sense of consciousness, but I became aware of the Oak as being present, with me, almost as if she acknowledged my presence in the same way I acknowledged hers. There was an autonomy, a sentience, emanating from her heartwood. We acknowledged one another, recognizing a shared space and time and momentarily transcending our respective self-interests. As Buber describes, this was an iterative experience—one that happened over and over but was not always present.

Through these reflections of my relationship with the Oak, I can see evidence of all 4 of the features of a primary encounter. There was a transcendence and relational reciprocity, shared and recognized autonomy, and a recognition of metaphysical holism that included me and the surrounding ecosystem. At times I felt the erasure of

space/time boundaries, which was often experienced as “pure presence” (Buber, 1970, p. 85). I often felt humble in the presence of the Oak, aware of her immense age and central role within the chaparral ecosystem. There were times of intense emotions as I sat and watched life happen around and between us. And I felt a strong sense of respect and care for this tree, evidenced by my emotion at her passing.

I cannot say the same of the Lodgepole. While she had a measure of aesthetic beauty, I did not experience the same sense of humility or awe in her presence. And, partly due to the location of this particular Lodgepole, I did not spend the same amount or quality of time with her. She was there, part of my community, but that was the extent of my awareness. I did not feel her autonomy or sentience. I did feel a sense of respect and care for the Lodgepole, but it was the same measure of respect I would extend to any member of the ecosystem.

This example of a primary encounter with a specific member of an ecosystem illustrates the roles time, observation, and aesthetics played in the development of relational reciprocity and transcendence. The following example transitions from considering a single biological member of the community towards a focus on a more dynamic entity. A river is not technically a defined, single biological entity. While it contains the substance of water, it is defined by movement and is more physical than biological. The water combined with movement makes a river fluid and dynamic. This vignette will illustrate the role of embodiment and significance of metaphysical holism.

7.1.2 The River

In 2001 I embarked on an educational journey that took place in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, northern Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, Texas, and Mexico. The journey was both physical and ideological. Physically, my fellow learners and I travelled through snow on snowshoes and skis, across desert landscapes on foot, and down the Rio Grande River by canoe. Ideologically, we journeyed from one educational paradigm based on standardization and teacher-centric learning to one that was open, free, and engaging.

Our first month together consisted of a winter camping trip that included a short expedition (5 days) on snowshoes followed by a longer expedition (14 days) on backcountry Nordic skis. This was my second experience camping in the winter (my first

was only two nights). Memories of this experience (validated by my journal entries) mostly involve being constantly cold, working myself to near exhaustion, and struggling to survive in extremely harsh conditions. There were also moments of beauty (mostly related to the sky… discussed more in the following section) and laughter, though these are less prominent memories.

The month that followed the winter experience was starkly different as we travelled to Big Bend National Park in the southwestern corner of Texas. We spent 5 days backpacking through the Chisos mountains followed by two weeks canoeing down the Rio Grande River and another week in Mexico exploring a different culture. The contrast between the cold, winter climate of the Northwoods and the arid, dry desert of southwest Texas worked to open doors of curiosity and discovery. Our time on the river stands out in my mind as particularly unique and transformational.

I vividly recall our first day. Having been a flatwater canoeing instructor at a camp along with one previous experience canoeing on the Buffalo River in Arkansas, I began the journey with a decent amount of hubris. I mistakenly thought I already knew how to navigate a canoe through moving water, but the River quickly showed me that I did not. As the stern paddler that day, it was my job (or so I thought) to steer the canoe. My attempts at steering caused us to zig-zag and constantly get our craft stuck underneath sweepers along the shore. My partner for the day became increasingly frustrated, and we were the slowest in the group due to my inability to hold a straight line.

At the end of that day, my pride was shattered. The following day our instructor gave us some paddling lessons, and I learned how moving water changes the effects of friction on the boat, where the boat wants to pivot, and how the bow and stern paddler need to work together to steer. We learned some new paddling strokes as well. I also clearly remember our instructor saying, “the only way to approach a river is on your knees, in humility.” This was both figurative and literal. Paddling on our knees became important to lowering our centre of gravity through rapids and thus preventing a swamp, but we also learned the importance of humility—recognizing the river as a dynamic and living force that can quickly overpower humanity’s frail attempts to ride along its surface.

Our journey down the Rio provided many moments of great joy. I remember one day that felt especially exhilarating as my paddling partner and I sought out the fastest currents, testing our ability to manoeuvre the boat successfully through more challenging water. The River helped us to hone our skills, and also introduced us to the joy of the dance.

There were also times of fear and trepidation. One day in particular, as evening and impending darkness was closing in, two of our members found themselves stuck on a rock at the top of a rapid that was too violent for our skill level. We had determined to portage the rapid, but this boat missed the eddy at our takeout. In their attempts to avoid the rapid, their boat became pinned, and a rescue ensued. Catastrophe was avoided thanks to a successful rescue, but the event left us shaken. The River reminded us of her power that day, and we renewed our commitment of humility and respect.

At the end of the paddling journey, our group articulated a shared sense of sadness over leaving the River, who had become a friend during those two weeks. We each felt a need to say goodbye, to have some sense of closure, and to recognize the relationship that had developed through our experience. After the last of the boats had been carried up the hill, I remember returning to the bank, alone, and bidding farewell to my new friend, thanking her for allowing us to travel along her surface. It was a surreal moment, poignant in my memories.

Reflexive analysis

I kept a meticulous journal throughout these 6 months of living under the stars, recording a daily log of our experiences and my thoughts and reflections related to our adventures. Our group also kept a group journal—one that we each took turns contributing to and reading aloud at the end of each day as a ritual of shared experience. These writings, along with a timeline memory writing exercise I engaged in to recognize the way memory shifts our perceptions of experiences, make up the autoethnographic data I've analysed to explore the phenomenon of a primary encounter.

The autoethnographic data uncovered a phenomenological difference between land-based and water-based outdoor adventure experiences. The following passage, taken from my timeline memory writing exercise, illustrates the difference:

> There was something different and unique about the more-than-human world, something that wasn't part of other experiences. I felt it most on river trips. Without fail, the river became my friend. It caressed me as it carried me along, even though at any moment it could smash me against the rocks. I learned a sort of dance with the river, an understanding. There was a constant flow of power, and by seeking to understand that flow, to work with it and not against it, we danced. It gave me sustenance, eased my burden. What did I give in return? (Timeline Memory, 7 November, 2020).

Land-based experiences are much more static than those that navigate across waterways. Phenomenologically, a deeper level of embodiment exists when a paddler surrenders a measure of control to the current or the tides. This embodiment demands a physical reciprocity, described above as a 'dance'. Whereas on a hike I don't generally need to concern myself with how the ground is moving beneath my feet (acknowledging that there can be a measure of movement when walking across sand, loose rock, or in deep snow); on a river there is a constant awareness of the current and how it is affecting my craft. I make continuous adjustments based on this feedback from the river, and this forces a constant acknowledgment of the other, even if it is not always conscious.

Learning to navigate a river is often articulated as learning to 'read the water'—understanding the language of currents, eddies, waves, etc. It could be conceived that a river tells a kind of story that changes constantly based on how much water is flowing, what's happening under the surface, new rockslides, snowmelt, etc. A river has its own language, a way to communicate these changes which are often subtle. In order to successfully navigate a river, I must learn this language and understand the story the river is communicating.

Additionally, navigating a river successfully requires a level of respect and humility. The current not only moves me, it also generates power. Awareness and respect of this power contributes to a sublime experience that includes both perceived and actual fear and results in (demands?) a measure of humility. Paddlers are keenly aware that failure to remain humble can result in hubris, where the power of the river is forgotten in lieu of overconfidence in one's own power and ability. (This often ends poorly for the paddler).

I should mention here that there is an alternative way some people approach the power of a river, one that does not involve humility. Stemming from fear (as alluded to earlier) and a more hierarchical, 'humans-against-nature' mindset, this approach involves a desire to conquer, to exercise physical prowess and mental acuity against the river in a spirit of competition. I've witnessed this approach through various interactions with raft guiding and kayaking communities, hearing paddlers talk about their river experiences in language that reveals this competition mindset. The language of conquering a river or achieving a 'first descent' exposes echoes of William James's "Moral Equivalent to War" and early Outward Bound and Boy Scout aims.

What made my experience different? In my case, I would suggest that my instructor encouraged and modelled an approach to the River stemming from a posture of humility. I will discuss this more in the following chapter but suffice to say here that navigating a river doesn't automatically result in a primary encounter or an acknowledgement of relations.

In the instance of a primary encounter, the embodied recognition of the other—in this case, the River—leads to a transcended self who is keenly aware (indeed, she must be keenly aware in order to avoid catastrophe) of the elemental relational dynamics at play. While this doesn't automatically produce an I-You encounter, it provides a platform from which an I-You encounter is possible. Recognition, even subconscious, is a first step. As the recognition deepens and finds its way into conscious thought, there is an opportunity to develop an awareness of the river as a powerful and autonomous force—one that both affects and is affected by its surrounding ecosystem. The reciprocal nature of this ecological relationship opens the door to encounter, as self-consciousness is exchanged for awareness of metaphysical holism. Physical reciprocity transcends holistically to relational reciprocity.

Similar to the description of primary encounter with the Oak, in my own experiences with rivers the shift from physical reciprocity to an I-You encounter happens as a result of this awareness. The interplay with the elements often takes place within the subconscious. But when this transitions to conscious thought via awareness, the mind can acknowledge the dance that is happening and the significance of the relational dynamics that make the dance possible. The mutual recognition of the power

and autonomy of the other produces emotions related to respect, humility, and compassion.

While the above passage focuses specifically on The River, I believe there are comparative attributes that could apply to other embodied and elemental experiences. Eric Brymer makes similar relational connections in reference to the fear experienced by BASE jumpers, "Fear is considered a friend; an emotion that keeps them alive; a warning voice that needs to be listened to but that shouldn't be a barrier to performance. Steering into the fear, when appropriate, opens the door to a range of extraordinary experiences" (2012).[22]

Both water-based experiences and BASE jumping share a similar embodied connection to the elements. In the case of The River, navigating waterways successfully requires a certain amount of surrender to the movement of the current. While some control is maintained to prevent dangerous entrapments, a paddler seeks a balance between surrender and control.

Similarly, BASE jumpers experience an embodied connection with the wind, which involves a more complete surrender followed by an assertive reclamation of some control when the parachute is deployed. I imagine that comparable embodied connections to elements could be revealed through other outdoor adventure activities such as windsurfing, hang gliding, and surfing.

The primary encounter with the River illustrates the role that embodiment plays in leading towards an experience of metaphysical holism. Embodiment with the elements—moving water, wind—seems to require the relinquishing of a measure of control, which forces acknowledgement of the other. When approached from a posture of humility, this acknowledgement has the potential to lead to a primary encounter. In this case, the encounter arises out of a relational ontology—the depth of embodiment, the dance, highlights the relational dynamic at play and inspires the encounter. There is a difference here from the encounter with the Oak, which certainly had relational

[22] While Brymer recognizes the ways in which fear can provide a certain type of companionship which carries similar relational qualities to what I've describes as a primary encounter, I contend that, if indeed it is the fear that is considered a friend, this relational dynamic would not necessarily lead to a virtue-oriented ethic.

dynamics but was founded in substance. This illustrates the extent to which embracing an ontological pluralism allows a fuller experience of encounter.

The final vignette will describe various experiences with the Sky, which differs quite significantly from the Oak and the River in that what defines the Sky is space. While the Sky contains substance in the form of dust particles and the like, the Sky itself is not substance. Thus, encounters with the Sky are altogether different. As will be seen in the descriptions and reflexion below, encounters with the Sky could be conceived of as encounters with relations rather than substance, which again stems from a metaphysics that embraces ontological pluralism.

7.1.3 The Sky

> Do you remember? The moss-covered rock that provided our auditorium, the mosquitoes that nearly drove us crazy earlier in the evening now gone to rest. Do you remember the way that curtain of light began to dance across the sky, smooth flowing undulations on an early July night. The conversations, the banter, the evening tasks of washing billies and feeding the fire—all ceased as we sat in awed silence. The light grew and faded, rippled in green and white curtains across the northern sky. At times it came so close you could touch it, then withdrew quickly like a frightened child. Bits of pink & red mixed with green & pale white, and we sat breathless under a moonless night. What a gift. Who needed 4th of July fireworks on a night like this? Heaven gave us her own, and wasn't it someone's birthday? But that night it was everyone's birthday, and we sat mesmerized by heaven's great celebration (Personal Journal, no date).

This vivid memory from a 2003 canoeing expedition in Canada illustrates one of many encounters involving the Sky. An interesting theme that emerged when analyzing autoethnographic data involved references to the Sky. Of all the natural features mentioned in journal entries, the Sky was most often referenced when discussing beauty or awe. Similar to the passage above, entries involving the Sky often included a hushed, almost reverent silence. In one example,

> Misty mountains with a roof of golden clouds. This could be one of the most beautiful sights yet. I practically ran to this overlook- afraid I was going to miss it. How much I miss because I'm too lazy to get out of bed for the sunrise. What

> an awesome privilege it is, to watch the world unfold as God paints the sky…. I forgot my camera as I raced out here, but a camera could in no way capture the beauty that is unfolding before me. Finally, the sun begins to break through and its rays wash over my face… (Personal Journal, 8 February, 2001)

The most poignant memory I have of the Sky from the 6 month wilderness leadership practicum happened on March 11, 2001. We had spent the day differently—instead of paddling, we hiked up the canyon wall to a place known as Burro Bluff. After days of travelling along the linear path the river had cut into the earth, we gained a new visual perspective of vast, open country and an endless Sky. That night, back in the canyon and from our campsite on a smooth sandstone platform, we sat in awe of a brilliant starry Sky, framed by sheer canyon walls and interrupted by magnificent flashes of distant lightning. We sat mesmerized in a hushed stillness, afraid that if we spoke or made noise, we would ruin the moment. Years later, a member of our group would write a song that describes this encounter,

I won't remember on what night
Diamonds adorned an ink-black sky;
Lightening slashed silver and the moon painted white.
But I will recall how we sat absorbed in silence and light…
Chalk of earth melting into azure sky
I'll forget the details by and by
But not its meaning, not how time stood still.
Resting in the company of kindred souls--
Sweet frozen instant of bliss—
I'll forever remember this.[23]

Other examples from the data reference the vivid colour of the Sky (especially when contrasted against snow or trees), the vastness and multiplicity of stars, sunrises and sunsets, moonrises, and the "canyon walls reaching towards the sky." The Sky was a constant companion, often reflecting the moods of the land, providing a canvas for the continual unfolding of aesthetic beauty.

[23] This is an excerpt from a song written by a member of our 6-Month WLP group. I have chosen not to cite it specifically for the purpose of anonymity, as detailed in my research ethics application.

Reflexive analysis

Descriptions of the Sky are perhaps the clearest examples from my data of the sublime. What makes these experiences unique from the encounter with the Oak or the River is the scale, the sense of being taken by surprise, and the distance. The negative sensation associated with this type of sublime experience was not fear; rather, it represented an inability to comprehend the sheer immensity of what was being witnessed. This is what Kant referred to as the mathematical sublime. It reminds us of our cognitive limitations and results in a humility that recognizes our inability to manipulate or control something based on our knowledge. There is an alterity at play here, a recognition of being in the presence of something wholly other, something that evades being known. When viewed through the lens of a substance-based ontology, this presents an epistemological dilemma. If the thing that I encounter is sublime and thus transcendent, how can I possibly know it? However, if this is viewed through a lens of relational ontology, the sublimity could be conceived of as relational. Rather than substance being the source of the sublime, the source is instead found in the relational. Epistemologically, the relationally sublime is known through intuition and perception rather than reason and empiricism. This kind of knowledge is a *knowing-with* rather than a *knowing-that* or *knowing-how*.

Sublime experiences with the Sky also tend to take us by surprise. While we know of certain conditions that can cause an awe-inspiring celestial display—solar flares that produce the northern lights, a certain amount of moisture in the atmosphere that creates a more vivid sunset, etc—we still cannot fully predict when these majestic displays will occur. The sky is an ever-ready stage that performs only when conditions are right. The audience below tends to forget and ignore until something grabs our attention—a particular pattern of colour, a unique cloud cover, an inexplicable movement of light. When we are present, it arrests our attention and draws us into transcendence. In a continuation of the opening journal entry, I described the experience this way,

> And it's these moments we live for. These that seem real, more authentic somehow. What makes them authentic? What is it that imprints these on our memory, that causes us to close our eyes and allow it all to come cascading into view? When I think back on some of these gems of my own journey, I realize

> that in almost all of these experiences I am drawn into something wholly other than myself; I lose myself completely to the point of forgetfulness. The struggles and frustrations and joys that were present only moments ago are lost and I am taken away. What's left is something greater than myself, but something with which I am intimately connected (Personal Journal, no date).

Buber discusses surprise as it relates to encounter, "The You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking" (1970, p. 62).

In addition to the scale and the unpredictable nature of the sublime Sky, there is also a sense of distance. This is both physical and relational. My experiences with the Sky do not carry the same intimacy as my encounters with the Oak or the River. In my journals, I do not refer to the Sky as a friend or recognize it as a sentient presence. Perhaps this is due in part to perception. The Sky is not perceived as substance; indeed, we know scientifically that it is not substance. Instead, it is more often referred to as a stage, a canvas, a landscape.

Quite literally, Sky is space. The perception of blue in the Sky is scattered light (Piazza and Degiorgio, 2005), appearing to us as blue but also an indication of distance and vastness. Rebecca Solnit, in her essay "The Blue of Distance," describes the ways in which distant objects, like the Sky, appear blue, only to transform into other colours as we draw closer (2005). For Solnit the colour blue arouses sensations of longing and desire, "[I]t is the distance between us and the object of desire that fills the space in between with the blue of longing" (2005, p. 109).

The Sky, it would seem, is a canvas for the relational. From the perspective of physics, the theatrics in the sky are a visual demonstration of relationships between substances. And perhaps the sublime feelings these demonstrations evoke represent a longing and desire for the relational, an illustration of what is possible, what is beyond the boundaries of substance—making the invisible visible.

7.2 The Oak, the River, the Sky, and primary encounters

In the previous chapter, I outlined 4 features that constitute a primary encounter:

1. An experience of metaphysical holism, which includes;

2. A temporary and unexpected erasure of space/time boundaries, which leads to;
3. An adoption of relational reciprocity which:
    - Recognizes the agency of the other and,
    - Embraces a piece of shared identity with the other;
4. Resulting in virtues of humility, respect, and care that inspires behaviours stemming from a sense of responsibility for the other.

These three vignettes have been offered as a means to illustrate and test the conceptual model against phenomenological experiences with the more-than-human world. Having offered a reflexive analysis of each of these three vignettes, in this section I will discuss the ways in which these experiences represent or do not represent a primary encounter based on how these features are evidenced in each experience.

7.2.1 The Oak as a primary encounter

I would argue that my experience with the Oak would be considered a primary encounter. The experience of metaphysical holism and the erasure of space/time boundaries happened through an iterative process that was not continuous but came and went over the span of 5 years. It was also unexpected in that I didn't engage with the Oak with this as an agenda. Buber discusses the iterative nature of encounter when he mentions that a continual I-You encounter would "consume" us. There were times when the Oak was an 'It', and other times when it would transform into a 'You'. The 'You' appeared unexpectedly and most often during my morning routine of sitting beneath her branches. True to Buber's philosophy of dialogue, you could say that my morning ritual was in reality a conversation between me and the Oak—a silent conversation in which meanings were developed and exchanged. The relational reciprocity was evident through these interactions and through my perception of mutual care for the other species within our relational sphere. The quality of time I spent with the Oak led to a deep sense of respect and care. I knew intrinsically that my actions had a direct effect upon the Oak, and I went about my daily routines with this awareness. I remember feeling somewhat complicit at the Oak's passing, wondering if there was something I could have done to prevent her death.

From my analysis, I suggest that a key element leading to the experience of a primary encounter in this case was time—both quantity and quality. The daily practice of agenda-free time with the Oak allowed for an authentic presence that attuned me to the Oak's sentience and agency. The aesthetic of the Oak may have prompted this practice, and the dialogue that ensued constituted a relational depth resulting in a primary encounter and relational reciprocity.

7.2.2 The River as a primary encounter

My experience with the River also represents a form of primary encounter. Whereas time and practice were important for the primary encounter with the Oak, embodiment and immersive time were key elements that led to a primary encounter with the River. The River required a daily surrendering of control and a continual awareness of the physical interactions between me and the River's ever-changing currents. In this way, the sensation of metaphysical holism and erasure of space/time boundaries manifested physically and was felt bodily. Mutuality and reciprocity with the River was partly a matter of survival, and I chose to approach that relationship through a posture of humility and respect rather than power and dominance.

The experience of time with the River was more immersive. Rather than a continual daily practice over a long span, the time I spent with the River was embodied. For the 6-8 hours of travel each day, my companions and I joined the River's time and space. This deepened the sense of metaphysical holism and forced me to recognize the nature of the River as I learned to navigate her currents.

The respect I gained for the river inspired virtues of care and responsibility. During my time on this trip, I learned from my instructor that upstream dams combined with certain agricultural practices had led to high levels of chemical toxicity in the water. This meant that we couldn't drink the water; there was no way to filter out these toxicities. I remember after our trip spending time researching this problem, which led to a deeper awareness of human impacts on our more-than-human neighbors and a sense of responsibility for the ecosystem as a whole. This highlights the value of abstract knowledge which is illustrated here through the experience of being unable to drink the water. This abstract knowledge led to curiosity and further investigation where I was intrinsically motivated to learn more, due in part to the relational

connection I had developed with the River. Taking the initiative to investigate further (rather than someone just giving me information that I did not ask for) made me more invested in the effort and thus resulted in an even deeper sense of care.

My encounter with the River illustrates the way a primary encounter unfolds through embodiment and immersive time. Key to the encounter in this instance was the initial posture of humility, which allowed me to experience the River with an attitude of mutuality and respect. This led to an even deeper humility, and inspired virtues of care and responsibility.

7.2.3 The Sky as a primary encounter

My experiences with the Sky easily align with the features of the sublime. Features of a primary encounter are also evident, specifically the experience of metaphysical holism and the temporary and unexpected erasure of space/time boundaries. Different from the time spent with the Oak and the River, the Sky is a constant presence. The sublime moment happens due to the occasion of a spark—something new, aesthetic, and dynamic grabs our attention and pulls us into an experience of hushed metaphysical holism that briefly suspends perceptions of space and time.

Can these encounters with the Sky be said to result in relational reciprocity and an awareness of the autonomy of the other? In the case of the Oak and the River, the subject of relational reciprocity—the 'You' of the I-You—was substance. In the case of the Oak, the substance was mostly static. The substance of the River was dynamic, but still substance in the form of water. The Sky, in contrast, is space. The subject of reciprocity in this case cannot be pinned down to substance. So what exactly constitutes reciprocity?

I could attempt to make a case of the reciprocity of substance by referencing movement, light, or colour. While these things are part of encounters with the Sky in that these are the visible representations of the phenomenon, these are not substance but rather evidence of relations. Movement, light, and colour evidence certain relational dynamics that otherwise remain unseen.

I would argue that my encounters with the Sky represent primary encounters with relations. The celestial theatrics of the northern lights display relational dynamics

that I am privileged to witness, and for a brief moment I also participate in the relationship. It could almost be said to constitute a secondary experience of primary encounter. My awareness in these moments is not on substance—if it is truly a primary encounter I am not thinking about the solar flares of the sun and the earth's atmosphere in the presence of northern lights. Instead, I am attuned to the unfolding visible evidence of relationship. The moment I began to attribute the phenomenon to the interplay between solar flares and the atmosphere, the encounter ceases and becomes in I-It experience.

There is evidence of humility and respect resulting from these encounters, particularly connected to a sense of awe and the mathematical sublime. The connection to virtue in this case is more abstract, but when assisted by metaphysical imagination there is potential to draw connections to relational dynamics that remain unseen. This has the potential to result in a deeper awareness of relational dynamics and holism, cultivating a posture that stems from relational ontology and concepts of mutual care and flourishing.

7.3 Virtues of respect and care

These three vignettes offer three illustrative examples of connecting with the more-than-human world. The Oak illustrates the role of aesthetics drawing me into an agenda-free daily routine in which time and attention played a role in the unfolding primary encounter. The encounter with the Oak was an encounter with a specific member of the biotic community. The River illustrates the ways in which embodiment and immersive time interact and the importance of approaching the experience from a posture of humility and respect. This encounter represents a connection with elemental dynamics—a combination between biotic and abiotic elements in the form of moving water. The primary encounters with the Sky suggest that this phenomenon is not restricted to substance and that it's possible to have a primary encounter with relations. While I have alluded to the ways in which these encounters lead to respect, care and a virtue-oriented ethic, here I offer more direct connections between encounter, relational reciprocity, and virtues.

In *Visions of Vocation*, Steven Garber asks the question, "Why is it that we care? Why is it that we see ourselves implicated in the world, in the way the world is and

isn't—and in the way it ought to be? And why does it seem that some do not care?"(2014, p. 17). Garber goes on to discuss an ethic of care that begins with seeing. Seeing, deeply and fully in a way that acknowledges the interconnectedness of metaphysical holism, leads to knowing. The knowing Garber discusses is not simply knowledge; it's connection, reflexivity, and reciprocity—the kind of knowing that Buber describes as encounter. And this kind of knowing—abstract rather than concrete—requires a response. Garber asks repeatedly in his book, "Knowing what I know about the way the world is, what am I going to do?" (2014, p. 56). What is my moral response to the condition of the world?

Garber then describes two possible responses. One takes the way of despair and leads to nihilism. Overwhelmed by the immensity of the world's problems, some feel ill-equipped to do anything that can make a difference, and so they choose to do nothing to address what they know. This can also breed a sort of hedonism. If there is nothing I can do to make a difference in the world, then why not focus on my own happiness to the exclusion of all else?

The other response is to be filled with such love and care for the world that we choose to pursue a life of virtue. In this, Garber connects epistemology to ethics, "The ways we learn shape our souls, for blessing or curse, consciously chosen or not, and are rooted in epistemological commitments which are not morally neutral" (2014, p. 87). The decision not to act is still a moral decision. Garber argues that knowledge is not morally neutral; knowledge leads to responsibility. Knowing is encounter, and this kind of encounter leads to responsibility. To know, in the sense of a primary encounter, is to care—to accept responsibility for our role in the reciprocity.

I would argue that the kind of response that leads to virtues of respect and care is rooted in relational reciprocity, which is an outcome of a primary encounter. Primary encounters help us move beyond human flourishing, recognizing a reciprocal relationship and the connection between human-flourishing and eco-flourishing.

In the context of outdoor adventure education, if we expect our programs and pedagogical techniques to inspire ecologically-minded behaviours, we must learn how to cultivate primary encounters which lead to relational reciprocity and a virtue-oriented ethic that inspires pro-environmental behaviours. This shift will help move

OAE from an adversarial relationship with the more-than-human world (as discussed in chapter 2) towards one that embraces eco-flourishing.

7.4 Summary

The intent of this chapter was to illustrate and test the concept of primary encounters using three vignettes from autoethnography. The vignettes offered three different examples of primary encounters and highlighted certain conditions that allowed for these encounters to occur including time and attention, embodiment and immersive time, and a posture of humility and respect. The vignettes also highlighted the occurrence of primary encounters with both substances and relations.

In chapter 2 I discussed the ways in which our connections with place are closely tied to our identity. I returned to this theme in chapter 6 to suggest primary encounters as a means to develop Raffan's notion of numinous connections to place, which Raffan claims represent some of the strongest bonds between humans and places. Where Raffan describes the numinous connections that emerged from his ethnographic research in the Thelon Game Sanctuary, I have sought to take this notion further by discussing *how* a numinous connection might develop and the resulting ethical implications of this kind of human-nature relation. Primary encounters extends place connections beyond substances to the relational, leading to relational reciprocity, which results in a holism and *knowing-with* that embodies a piece of shared identity.

This quality of relationship, bound up in identity and reciprocity, requires a moral response. Contrary to the anthropocentric posture of traditional outdoor adventure education where the primary focus is on individual growth and development, an experience that encourages primary encounters transcends the individual. The individual is still considered, but the transcendence pulls us above substance to acknowledge the primacy of relationship and the interplay between substance and relations. And this kind of relationship implicates us. We are not morally neutral. Our very presence affects the fabric of metaphysics, and the resulting knowledge carries a morality that leads to a response. As Garber asks, "knowing what we know, what must we do?" Or, what is the ethical response to this reciprocity? Metaphysical holism moves us beyond human-flourishing to focus on eco-flourishing. I would argue that when we

come to know by way of a primary encounter, we can't help but be respond with respect and care.

With a fuller understanding of what constitutes a primary encounter and why this is important, the remaining question is how do we create a space for primary encounters to occur? Through the above vignettes, it becomes possible to imagine some of the practical applications of primary encounters in outdoor adventure education. The next chapter will explore these practical applications and suggest a pedagogical approach that moves from *place-responsive* to *place-inclusive*.

Chapter 8: Implications for Pedagogy

Philosophers from the phenomenological tradition suggest that the goal of phenomenology is not to impart new forms of knowledge. Rather, phenomenology seeks to highlight a sort of recognition, to identify a phenomenon of experience that will at once feel familiar and produce a new awareness of the phenomenon's significance (Cerbone, 2017). Taylor Carman discusses Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek word *logos* as "letting something be seen" (as quoted in Carman 2016, p. 183) and, based on this construction, describes phenomenology as something that "consists precisely in letting the ordinarily unseen dimension of what is seen *be seen*." (2016, p. 183, emphasis in the original).

In the spirit of this tradition, the phenomenon of primary encounters is not intended to reveal something new. Rather, my intent is to shed light on an occurrence that is part of the human experience, but that often remains invisible, staying just beyond the realm of conscious perception. In addition, as was revealed in the preceding chapter, a primary encounter often involves a level of cultivation. In my examples with the Oak and the River, an I-You encounter did not happen immediately. It took time to develop (through regular practice in one instance and immersive embodiment in the other) and was cultivated through increasing awareness of the autonomy of the other and the reciprocal dynamic of my relation to the other.

If I have done my job, readers of the three vignettes in the previous chapter were struck by something familiar—something they had experienced themselves but perhaps had never quite taken the time to identify or cultivate. Throughout this project I have argued that certain aspects of our relationship with the more-than-human world are primary and material—they happen to us before any kind of cognitive or social construction creates meaning. And I have further argued that these encounters have the potential to cultivate virtues of respect and care, leading to relationships that connect with meaning and identity and thus result in a valuation that transcends instrumentalism. This results in a sense of place that is numinous and both arises from and results in meaning based in relational reciprocity. Whereas Euro-centric ontologies often encourage a one-way relationality associated with place (evidenced by privatization and ownership), indigenous ontologies that recognize the primacy of

relations recognize that relationality is reciprocal and transcends space-time boundaries and concepts of ownership in metaphysical holism.

Our world desperately needs this relational paradigm shift as we acknowledge the era of the Anthropocene. And while the idea of this new epoch is still debated (Zalasiewicz *et al.*, 2011), what is clear is that human progress has negatively affected the more-than-human world. In many cases, the progress of our species has come at the expense of our more-than-human neighbours. We see this through the loss of biodiversity, depletion of our soil, and the melting of ice caps. Human behaviours are negatively impacting our ecosystem (Bernstein *et al.*, 2008).

In chapter 2, I discussed the ways in which traditional OAE pedagogical approaches have the potential to lead towards adversarial relationship with the more-than-human world. In addition to this adversarial relationship, the anthropocentric nature of traditional OAE pedagogy sets humans apart from the more-than-human world and breeds a false dichotomy, creating a false perception that our presence in natural environments "leaves no trace" (and also a perception that "leaving no trace" is desirable and/or beneficial to humans and the more-than-human world).

The discussion of pedagogy in chapter 2 focused on the historical and cultural roots of OAE and the resulting goals of teaching, often centered on anthropocentric outcomes related to character development. I also acknowledged the emergence of place-responsive outdoor education, including the wild pedagogies and the re-wilding education movements. Within this discourse, I acknowledged a philosophy–pedagogy value gap—an assumption that adapting pedagogical methods will produce a value structure that elicits virtues of respect and care and pro-environmental behaviours. If outdoor adventure education is to play a role in addressing climate change and encouraging pro-environmental behaviours, this philosophy-pedagogy value gap needs to be addressed, infusing new value systems that address the nature and quality of human relationships with the more-than-human world.

My attempt with this project has been to first address what I've determined to be the problematic philosophical assumptions that negatively impact traditional OAE pedagogy, and then suggest new assumptions that will provide stronger support for *place-inclusive* pedagogy, stemming from the conceptual framework of primary encounters.

This chapter returns to pedagogy and begins to address this gap with a focus on *experience*, which is often considered to be the distinguishing factor that differentiates OAE pedagogy from other forms of pedagogy. Beginning with the overarching philosophy of experiential education, I outline some of the epistemological assumptions around experience that have historically driven this educational tradition, looking at the experiencing self, the experiencing community, and finally the experiencing place. I then suggest ways in which relational ontology and primary encounters can be cultivated in OAE pedagogy and how pedagogues might enable a place-inclusive pedagogy that allows room for the more-than-human world to contribute to the construction of knowledge.

8.1 An epistemology of experience

Outdoor Adventure Education has traditionally relied upon experiential education as a foundation for pedagogy. According to the Association for Experiential Education, "Experiential education is a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities" (Association for Experiential Education, no date).

Much has been written about Experiential Education, especially regarding ways this philosophical approach informs OAE pedagogy. One of the more complete overviews of the philosophical foundations of experiential education can be found in Jay Robert's *Beyond Learning by Doing.* Using the metaphor of a river, Roberts describes several "currents" that have contributed to the overarching philosophy of experiential education: the romantic current, the pragmatic current, the critical current, the normative current, and the hopeful current. Roberts's book is a good example of what I have always found to be interesting, and in some ways troubling, about discussions of experiential education philosophy. Rather than being a philosophy in its own right, experiential education borrows from a variety of different ideas to create a sort of patchwork philosophy. Various pedagogues, including Roberts, reference the ideas of Romanticism, Pragmatism, and Critical Pedagogy (to name a few) as being part of the experiential education patchwork. I don't imagine experiential education is

unique in this way; however, most of the patches that make up the overall tapestry come from ideas related to epistemology. Ontological discussions are scarce, and where they do occur they focus primarily on humans and the nature of being human (Harrison, 2010; Quay, 2013).

Does this really matter? I believe it does if we are to make radical changes in our educational structures, which many suggest is necessary for the health and survival of our planet and, through our reciprocal relations, humans (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Morse, *et al.*, 2018). I'm reminded of the evolution within the field of environmental ethics. Many ethical theories that recognize the value of the more-than-human world simply create arguments that extend already accepted ethical notions to various aspects of the natural world. Known as ethical extensionism, several examples of this approach are discussed by Joseph DesJardins in his *Environmental Ethics* survey text (2012). One notable example from DesJardins involves extending ethical (and thus legal) standing to mountains, trees, and rivers, which was the foundation of the *Sierra Club vs. Morton* Supreme Court case in which the Sierra Club represented the Mineral King Valley to block a ski resort from being established. While ethical extensionism has some merit, I argue that changing human values at a foundational level cannot happen without challenging foundational ontologies.

New environmental philosophies are working to establish stronger ontological foundations for environmental ethics, including Deep Ecologists, Ecofeminists, and Queer Ecologists. While it is outside the scope of this project to delve into the philosophical foundations of these approaches to environmental ethics, it's worthwhile to recognize their acknowledgement of the need to address the metaphysical and ontological assumptions that drive our values and ethical structures.

Returning to pedagogy, I argue that within OAE we have suffered from a similar sort of extensionism. We have engaged in pedagogical borrowing without fully considering the philosophical assumptions that drove the development of these pedagogies. Addressing the philosophy-pedagogy value gap will involve delving under the surface to look at the philosophical plumbing and consider whether any repairs or re-routing is warranted.

8.1.1 From individual to social

One of the primary features that is consistent within all variations of experiential education is the attention given to experience. Epistemologically, experiential educators contend that the construction of knowledge begins with experience. While this concept has been generally uncontested, there has been some historical debate regarding how experiences are construed.

Take for example David A. Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which is often cited as the clearest theory of experiential education (Figure 3). Kolb's model relies on a concrete experience, which is reflected upon on an individual level, creating an abstract conception which requires experimentation to test validity. This experimentation begins a new cycle and constitutes a return to the first task of a concrete experience. Kolb takes some of his cues from John Dewey, who outlined the essential role that experience plays in education (Dewey, 2007).

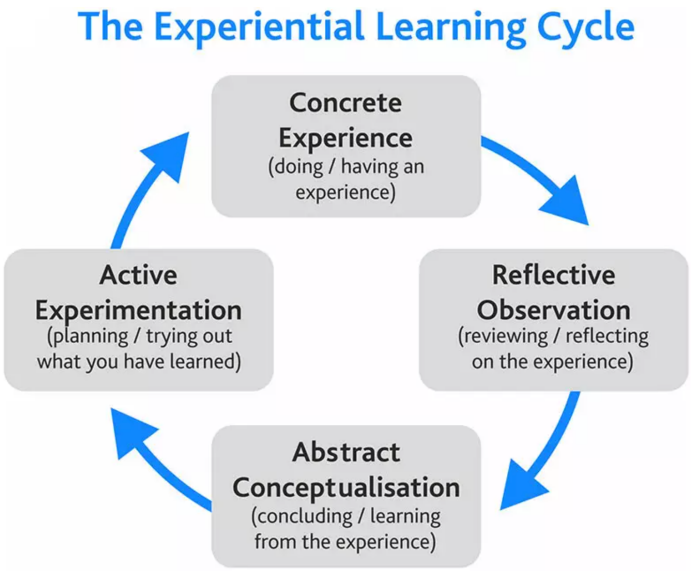

Figure 3: The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

But *experience* has been highly debated by philosophers, especially as it relates to epistemology and the validity of knowledge gained through experience. Experiences, after all, involve our senses as well as our emotions. Can either of these be trusted to provide an objective view of the world?

April Crosby (1981) discusses the debate around epistemology that occurred between the Rationalists and Empiricists of the 16th century. Rationalists, who followed

the philosophy of René Descartes, claimed that true knowledge could only be gained through reason, whereas Empiricists, led by David Hume, argued that only data empirically generated from the senses could be trusted as true knowledge. It was Immanuel Kant who provided a way forward. He identified a problematic ontological assumption at the root of both Rationalism and Empiricism; namely, that the world has some objective order that we must perceive correctly to truly gain knowledge. This would make knowledge impossible for us to perceive as it would require us to be outside of our own minds.

Kant instead suggested that the source of order is in the human mind. That is, rather than the mind attempting to perceive some objective order that already exists in the world, the mind instead is an active agent that constructs order. Kant allowed space for experience to play a role in education by acknowledging the activity of perception. The mind plays a role in constructing knowledge, combining sensory experience with rational thought to support a coherence model of truth (Crosby, 1981).

However, constructing knowledge in this way is a solitary endeavour, an internal process that exists in the mind of the self. Education that relies on Kant's ideas alone does not leave room for the influence of other humans. The pragmatists of the early 20th century sought to address this by suggesting that "individual experience… is realized only in transaction with others" (Roberts, 2012, p. 51). Pragmatists contended that the construction of knowledge extends outside of the mind as we interact with others. We construct knowledge together through intersubjectivity. In other words, the mind constructs knowledge by combining sensory experience with rational thought, but knowledge is also gained through co-construction with other minds.

This acknowledgement of social construction's role in epistemology recognizes that the self is connected to other humans through our understanding of the world. Pedagogically, adopting the notion of social construction means that learning is an inherently social experience. Parker Palmer addresses this by describing learning as a "community of truth." In *Courage to Teach*, he claims that "reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it" (1998, p. 95). Palmer illustrates this and redefines education as being subject-centered and relationally dynamic (Figure 4).

Palmer's work serves to empower learners by flattening the traditionally hierarchical structure between teacher and student and centring the subject as a unifying element in the educational community. In this way, he attempts to illustrate the removal of barriers—power dynamics, the withholding of knowledge, the inaccessibility of the subject matter—by suggesting a synergistic relationship as a starting point. In addition, Palmer advances the notion of 'self' by recognizing the role of the subject as a co-constructor of knowledge. In Palmer's Community of Truth, learning is a dynamic and relational process that includes the subject as an active member and as a centralizing presence.

Palmer's work is valuable, but it stops just short of allowing for a relational ontology as a starting point. While he identifies the role of relationship in holding a community of truth together, he does not go so far as to suggest a primacy of relations. He also does not clearly define what he means by 'subject', leaving the reader to fill in the blanks. The reader is also left to imagine a setting for this community as the notion of place is left undefined. The illustration is place-less, left on the white background of the page without any reference to *where* this community might find itself.

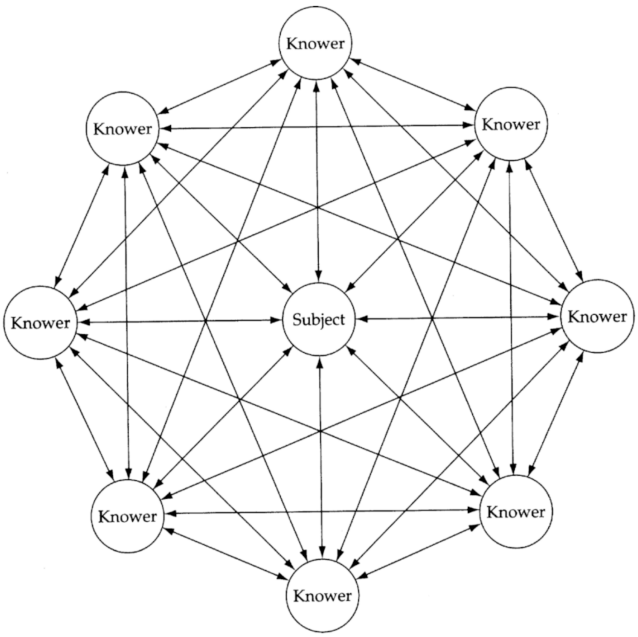

Figure 4: Parker Palmer's educational model (Palmer, 1998, p. 102)

To be fair, Parker Palmer is not an outdoor educator. The context of his experience comes from teaching in a classroom environment, and this environment is

assumed in his writing. His audience is educators in the traditional sense, who are largely stuck inside the four walls of a human-built environment.

Palmer's model provides an interesting stepping-off point to broaden the notion of "community" in ways that might include the more-than-human world. As illustrated in this section, we can trace how epistemology has been broadened to recognize the ways in which humans construct knowledge—both individually and socially. Can we broaden this concept of construction to the more-than-human world? Starting from a place of relational ontology that recognizes the autonomy of the more-than-human world allows for the possibility of knowledge that is co-constructed by humans and non-humans. How might the concept of primary encounters inform this kind of approach to pedagogy?

8.1.2 The experiencing place

Recognizing the role of place and the more-than-human world is not a new concept in OAE pedagogy. Various pedagogical approaches to this have been categorized under the umbrella of experiential education, including place-based education, place-responsive education, community-based education, and wild pedagogies. Discussed previously in chapter 2, it will be helpful to review some of the tenets of these approaches to education as we begin exploring connections with primary encounters.

Place-based education was developed in the early 1990s by educators who advocated for a stronger connection to the social, cultural, and environmental components of the particular location where learning takes place. Researchers and educators in Europe and Australia who advocated for an even stronger connection with the specific elements of the environment began to use the terminology 'place-responsive' pedagogy. While the terms 'place-based' and 'place-responsive' are often used interchangeably, there are some slight differences between these two approaches.

Place-based education uses pedagogical strategies to orient learners to the local environment, encouraging a sense of connectedness to place (Sobel, 2004). This pedagogical approach has been suggested as a way to help locate education within communities and is often used interchangeably with community-based education. As

such, place-based education connects pedagogy with local narratives and place-making, situating the learning within the local culture and the stories that make up that culture.

Place-responsive education takes learning a step further by infusing critical pedagogy into place-based education. Critical pedagogy recognizes the role of humans as agents of change. Inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005), critical pedagogy suggests an educational approach that moves beyond inert knowledge acquisition and assumes that all learning leads to action. Epistemologically, critical pedagogy presents learning as forward motion and challenges educators to consider the kind of movement they want to inspire in learners. With the accumulation of knowledge comes the responsibility to apply that knowledge in the learners' social and cultural contexts. Gruenwald (2003b) suggests combining the ideas of critical pedagogy with place-based education in a "Critical Pedagogy of Place." This idea eventually evolved into a place-responsive pedagogy that "involves the explicit efforts to teach by means of an environment with the aim of understanding and improving human-environment relations" (Mannion, Fenwick and Lynch, 2013, p. 792).

The emergence of (new) materialism coupled with an increasing awareness of indigenous traditions has further influenced the way we conceive of place within education and has led to new pedagogical approaches, including wild pedagogies. While there is ongoing debate about what exactly (new) materialism entails (Gamble, Hanan and Nail, 2019), a common feature of this ontological turn is a movement away from dualisms and thus a recognition of the reciprocal nature of humans and the more-than-human world. Specifically, (new) materialists recognize that matter is not a passive substance but instead is active, lively, and agentic (Coole and Frost, 2010). As discussed previously, a strong criticism of (new) materialism is that it is not new at all but serves to exploit long-held indigenous ontologies through centuries of oppression and a misconstrued notion that (new) materialism stems from Euro-centric intellectualism (Todd, 2016).

Having already addressed the significance of (new) materialism and indigenous ontologies in a previous chapter, here I will discuss the influence these concepts have had on OAE pedagogy. These concepts have taken pedagogy down a new path of not only centring place in the process of learning but recognizing that the more-than-human world can be an active participant in the educational process.

8.2 Place-inclusive pedagogy

Wild pedagogies emerged in 2012 in reaction to the increasing standardization of education alongside concerns about the health and future of the more-than-human world. From its beginning as a graduate course at Lakehead University, the idea grew to include a multi-national group of concerned educators, many of them from OAE traditions (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, *et al.*, 2018). These educators began organizing colloquiums to discuss the ways in which education can address the challenges facing our planet. These discussions and subsequent publications have extended the concept of place-responsive pedagogy to what I consider to be place-*inclusive* pedagogy.

The wild pedagogies website lists two premises upon which these ideas rest: "First, human relationships with the Earth are not sustainable. Second, education is a necessary partner in any transformational project of the scale required to address the first premise" (Kazi, 2023b). Based on these premises, six "touchstones" have been suggested for educators wishing to put these premises into practice:

1. Nature as co-teacher
2. Complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity
3. Locating the wild
4. Time and practice
5. Socio-cultural change
6. Building alliances and the human community (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, *et al.*, 2018)

The authors are careful to state that these touchstones are not meant to suggest a formulaic method for teaching. Instead, they serve as guides, "places of departure and places to return to" (2018, p. 79). In addition, the authors invite further discussion and research that might strengthen educational approaches based on wild pedagogies.

There is much to unpack here, and many connections can be made between primary encounters and wild pedagogies. Since touchstones 1, 2, and 4 are most relevant to this project, I will focus specifically on these and discuss how primary encounters might inform approaches to OAE that are more place-inclusive.

8.2.1 Nature as co-teacher

The first touchstone of wild pedagogies, the concept of nature as co-teacher deepens the role that the more-than-human world might play in educative settings. The wild pedagogies authors describe it this way,

> This touchstone reminds educators to acknowledge, and then to act, on the idea that those teachers capable of working with, caring for, and challenging student learning include more-than-human beings. This implies more than simply learning from the natural world; it includes learning with and through it as well; and thus, its myriad beings become active, fellow pedagogues (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Morse, *et al.*, 2018, p. 80).

In describing what this pedagogical approach may entail, the authors acknowledge a degree of ambiguity. While certain material elements of a place might be known prior to a direct experience, there are performative elements that will be unexpected. Layering the second touchstone (complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity) onto the first, if we are to open ourselves to acknowledge the more-than-human world as co-teacher, it requires an openness to the unknown and adaptability to what the performative world might throw our way.

To illustrate this concept, I'm reminded of an expedition I led during my early 20's. My co-instructor and I wanted to recognize how the natural world might help illustrate some of the learning outcomes we created for our trip. The expedition was a college orientation trip, so students were transitioning between high school and college, most of them leaving home for the first time. For our trip, we wanted to focus on the challenges that this might entail and how these students might prepare themselves ahead of time for these challenges by focusing on nourishment. Questions we posed to the students included things like, "What are you digesting, physically, mentally, and emotionally? How might the things that you are allowing yourself to consume impact your physical, mental, and emotional health?" As we sought to provide direct experiences that might support these concepts, we planned our backpacking route in such a way that we would have very different water sources each night—clear lakes, leech-infested bogs, springs, waterfalls, etc.—and we facilitated these experiences by discussing how the different elements that life throws our way can

impact our overall health and well-being. We did this by discussing the particular water source—how easy or hard it was to collect the water, how many steps we had to take to make the water potable, the taste of the water, etc.

Some might hear the story of this expedition and think, "Oh! That's a great example of nature as co-teacher!" Is it? I would argue the opposite, and instead suggest that this story provides a good example of utilizing an aspect of the more-than-human world as an object lesson. While, as educators, my co-instructor and I remained open to unknown elements of the experience and how these might impact the learning, we had a very clear and a very anthropocentric goal that impacted our integration of the natural world. To put it plainly, we had an agenda. The dynamic nature of the natural world dictated that we remain adaptable to how that agenda might play out, but we stuck to our stated purpose and learning outcome, utilising (manipulating?) an element of the more-than-human world to help us achieve our pedagogical aims.

Additionally, in this example we chose to focus on specific substances within the natural world—things that we already knew existed due to our previous experiences in these places (and the information provided on maps). While there were some relational dynamics, our pedagogical focus was primarily impacted by the nature of substance—where the water was located, the quality of the water for drinking purposes, etc.—relationally there was an acknowledgement of our dependence upon water and the degree to which we had to purify the water to allow for safe drinking. However, this relational dynamic was not reciprocal. It was focused exclusively on human health and well-being. We did not discuss the ways in which the water supported other life forms, how our presence might impact water quality and subsequently their health and well-being, or the ways in which the water connected us with other things that also depended on it for sustenance. The water taught the students what we wanted them to learn, it served as an object that we could construct to meet our stated goals. Our relationship with these water sources was based on an I-It mode of relating.

This is an example of applying 'nature as co-teacher' from the stance of a substance-based ontology. While we may have seen similar outcomes had we approached this expedition from a relationally-oriented ontology, I would argue that we also would have spent more time listening and seeing and would have experienced a deeper connection to the more-than-human world, highlighting our interdependence

upon the water and recognizing our need to respect and care for these sources of sustenance for all forms of life. These ontological considerations are discussed in more detail below. First I will explore how touchstones 2 and 4 might be enhanced through primary encounters.

8.2.2 Complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity

This second touchstone connects to primary encounters by allowing space for the unexpected. As discussed in Chapter 6, primary encounters are material and unplanned. There is almost always an element of surprise—sometimes sudden and sometimes occurring over time (as in the case of the Oak). While there are a number of ways to encourage an openness to complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity, here I would suggest that this is a further argument to reimagine the role of adventure in outdoor education.

Though not all definitions of adventure include elements of risk and danger (particularly in Eastern countries such as China and Taiwan), most definitions include acknowledging some element of uncertainty (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2014). While there may be a hoped-for outcome, there exists an awareness (and sometimes even an expectation) that the outcome will be unexpected. For Mortlock, adventure "always ends with feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction, or elation about the successful completion of that journey" (as quoted in Ewert and Sibthorp, 2014, p. 4). In my 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum, we often discussed adventure and at times contrasted an adventure with an ordeal. One differentiating factor was that adventure, while sometimes not enjoyable during the experience, results in a sense of satisfaction. When the outcome is negative, it might be more appropriately referred to as an ordeal or even an incident.

Notably for this study, adventure embraces uncertainty and allows room for spontaneity to unfold as one encounters unpredictable elements and experiences (particularly in the case of outdoor adventure). Embodiment deepens the adventure as humans are continually faced with adapting to changing environmental conditions (temperature, precipitation, wind, currents, animal encounters, etc). While we often gather as much data as possible in preparation for an outdoor adventure—including

checking the weather, planning routes with mapping software, reading previous trip reports—there are still unknown factors that can impact the overall outcomes.[24]

Whereas with traditional OAE these dynamics are often constructed within the educational experience to highlight intra/interpersonal outcomes—such as self-discipline or tenacity—if we shift our focus on the non-human elements of the experience it might allow for primary encounters to emerge from these experiences. Under these conditions, our psyche is already attuned to the uncertainty and senses are often heightened in order to adapt to changing conditions. Many of the decisions we make during outdoor adventures are based primarily on feedback from the environment, making us more attuned to the non-human world around us.

The vignettes in the previous chapter illustrate a few ways this attunement to the more-than-human world can lead to a primary encounter. In my encounter with the Oak, for example, I sat on my porch with no agenda. While this wasn't technically outdoor adventure, there was a measure of embracing the unknown and spontaneity as I allowed the world to unfold before me and opened my mind to what it revealed. The expedition on the Rio Grande was classic outdoor adventure, full of risk and uncertain outcomes. In this example, the embodiment required to successfully navigate the river became an almost physical connection with the elements of the river, uniting us in metaphysical holism. And finally, the Sky almost commands attention when we are outdoors for an extended amount of time. Weather becomes a bigger factor during these experiences, and we often look to the Sky to determine what weather we might expect. In addition, sleeping outside gives us much more access to the night Sky than our indoor environments. I have to work a little harder, for instance, to be attuned to the phases of the moon when I am not sleeping under the stars.

I would argue that, particularly in the second and third vignettes, adventure helped to pave the way for primary encounters because of the embrasure of uncertainty, creating the space necessary for complexity, the unknown, and

[24] It's worth acknowledging that technological advancements are minimizing the amount of uncertainty associated with adventure. Advanced mapping features, for instance, can tell you where there is cell phone coverage or provide satellite imagery that reveals the amount of snow coverage. It could be argued that this is impacting the positive outcomes of adventure, something I do not have the space to explore further.

spontaneity. A reimagining of adventure within outdoor education has the potential to profoundly affect ecological relationships by setting the stage for primary encounters.

Acknowledging the need to create space requires attending to the impacts of time and practice, which is the subject of touchstone 4.

8.2.3 Time and practice

In the Oak vignette, the primary encounter evolved through 5 years of repeated exposure to the same member of the biologic community. Sam Harrison (2010), reviewing the literature of place-based education, suggests that one common theme in pedagogical approaches that are place-responsive is "a series of visits to one locality" (7). This runs contrary to many approaches in outdoor adventure education, which primarily involve going to a location that is 'away' (e.g. not home) and traveling through the environment without lingering in any one spot. Perhaps an exception to this can be found on water-based experiences and extended mountaineering expeditions. In these kinds of experiences, while the specific location within the landscape might change, adventurers are spending extended time on the same body of water or same mountain peak, thus providing immersive time with a larger feature of the environment. During my own river expedition, we only spent one night in each particular location (with the exception of one campsite where we spent two nights). However, we were on the same body of water daily, in the same riparian ecosystem.

It's possible that adventurers experience something similar when completing a through-hike on a long trail, or completing a grade VI rock climb that extends over several days. Regardless, the autoethnographic data does point to the role of time combined with an attention to place as key to the development of relational reciprocity.

Later I will discuss some practical implications of these ideas, but first I'd like to explore how new ontological structures can strengthen place-inclusive approaches like wild pedagogies.

8.3 Ontological considerations

Wild pedagogies is another example of adjusting methodology without recognizing the need to address onto-epistemological underpinnings. While I

acknowledge that there are implied assumptions related to both ontology and epistemology hidden within wild pedagogies, these aren't addressed directly or in any meaningful way in the texts or journal articles associated with the movement. I would argue that when epistemology is driven by a substance-based ontology, educators are often drawn to teaching methods that are formulaic, repeatable, and thus dependable. Substance-based ontology assumes an ability to know 'objective reality', an ability to replicate learning through a repeatable process.

The authors of wild pedagogies attempt to address this by referring to 'touchstones' rather than steps or stages and recognizing that these are only meant to provide a bit of guidance, but it's hard for this to sink in for those of us who come from philosophical backgrounds that relies upon objectivity and an ability to know truth.

If we can break free from these ontological bonds, we might experience freedom from the need to understand "objective reality." Relational ontologies allows for acknowledgement of the space around and between, connecting us to 'the innate You', or Shenikah. When we are able to let go of 'objective reality' and acknowledge the ontological significance of relations, we can epistemologically embrace mystery and metaphysical imagination, adopting the concept of *knowing with*. This approach to knowing assumes reciprocity and connects to a deeper valuation of 'the other' as a 'You', having agency, and contributing to the identity of 'I'. In the context of such a relational dynamic, we are naturally drawn to an ethic of care, as caring for 'You' means caring for 'I' and vice versa.

8.4 Getting practical

So, how might this actually happen within pedagogy? As I've detailed throughout this thesis, I argue these kinds of encounters are primary, *a priori*, and precede our construction of them whether through mental construction or social construction. If that's the case, then what role does pedagogy play? Is the concept of primary encounters useful for educators, or does it simply make pedagogy moot?

Buber talks about both I-It experiences and I-You encounters as "modes of relating." When he differentiates between these modes of relating, what he describes is a particular relational posture that changes the dynamics between both subjects. The 'I' relating to a 'You' has a different mindset, a different state of being than the 'I' relating

to an ‘It’. When I truly encounter another through an I-You mode of relating, I am approaching the other with an openness to how we connect and what she might have to say to me. In this way, I am acknowledging the agency of the other, opening a line of dialogue.

The concept of a phenomenon being primary contradicts the idea that it can somehow be facilitated through an educational method. These encounters happen to us, often unexpectedly. Trying to somehow facilitate a primary encounter has the potential to manifest as something inauthentic and contrived. As an educator, I can’t “make” students have a primary encounter. The moment this becomes my agenda, I have lost the opportunity since one of the conditions of a primary encounter is the lack of an agenda.

I suggest, however, that education can play a role in developing the capacity and recognition of primary encounters, making way for the kinds of human-nature relationships that inspire respect and care. This can happen in three ways. Firstly, pedagogues can play a role in cultivating the kind of ontological posture that makes primary encounters possible. Second, as OAE educators cultivate their own postures that include an awareness of primary encounters, they can recognize when opportunities emerge and open up a space that allows these encounters to unfold. Thirdly, recognizing that humans have an innate need to construct meaning from our experiences (Baumeister, 2005), educators can help facilitate this construction in a place-inclusive manner, inviting the more-than-human world to be part of the construction rather than just a substance to be analyzed.

8.4.1 Cultivating new ontological postures

I’m using the word ‘postures’ to frame this section with intentionality. Physically speaking, a posture is a way of carrying oneself. It’s very rarely something we are conscious of. We move through life with a certain type of walk, a certain way of standing, that is developed over years and influenced by innumerable factors. We are often only aware of our physical posture when it is highlighted by others. At such times, someone briefly holds up a metaphorical mirror and we are suddenly aware of how our bodies are positioned relative to the physical world. I recall times when I’ve been told

that I often sit with my legs crossed, or that I'm leaning back with my arms crossed as if I'm disinterested in what's happening.

Postures are said to communicate something about our state of mind. Psychologists in the 1960s reported that our physical postures communicate a great deal during group interactions, including our individual contributions to a group and how those contributions are related to one another. "All English-speaking people (who also move 'in English') seem to utilize this postural information *unconsciously* for orienting themselves in a group" (Scheflen, 1964, p. 316, emphasis in the original).

I would argue that we unconsciously carry an ontological posture that communicates our ability to interact relationally with the more-than-human world. When my only interactions with the more-than-human world have been from an I-It mode of relating, I will likely develop an ontological posture that is relationally closed, focused inward, and absorbing relational dynamics like a black hole that doesn't give back.

It takes time for postures to shift. One theme that emerged from the autoethnographic data discussed in the previous chapter was the role that time played in my own ontological shift. In the case of the Oak, I only became aware of her as a presence through several years of open and unstructured time and practice. In the case of the River, my posture was impacted by a more embodied and immersive experience of time—a deeper time. In these cases, there were many moments over the course of time when I became more acutely aware of the other as an autonomous presence. But there were also seeds planted before I was ever in the presence of these others.

It would be a near-impossible task to uncover all the moments and minute factors that may have influenced my own ontological shift through the years. However, I can point to one pedagogical influence that was revealed through a free-writing exercise I used to produce a timeline memory. In the process of creating the timeline, I recalled an event from the winter camping expedition that was part of my 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum.

We were on skis during our long expedition, and I was skiing next to our leader. I made a comment about some trees as we skied past, how they were growing in such a remote part of the forest. I wondered aloud why they were growing where so few people could enjoy them. My leader responded that maybe the trees weren't there for

us but were simply growing at the pleasure of their Creator. In my free-writing exercise, I reflected on this conversation:

> This is my first memory of instrumentalism vs. inherent value. My comment was based on an anthropocentric perspective of the trees being valuable because they benefit humans aesthetically. Sara's comment argued for the trees' right to exist apart from human benefit. Of course, I didn't understand it in those terms at the time, but I remember it being eye-opening for me then, and thinking about it for a while as we skied. Today I remember that interaction as a pivotal change for me.

Another example, mentioned earlier, involved the instruction our leader gave to us as we learned to navigate the River. In the process of teaching us new paddle strokes and how the bow and stern paddler can work together to steer the boat, he told us to stay on our knees. "The only way to approach a River is on your knees, in humility." This encouraged a posture of humility, one that my instructor had already learned and curated and passed along to us. While I can't make any definitive claims, I do wonder if this posture was a large part of what led to the primary encounter with the River.

These examples represent how I would suggest pedagogy can play a role in shifting ontological postures. Of course, it must begin with our own ontological work. In the first example above, my instructor was coming from different ontological stance and thus was able to interpret our shared experience with the trees differently. She had done her own ontological work and chose to share a piece of her renewed perspective with me during an opportune teachable moment. The same could be said for the second example. These kinds of ontological shifts are subtle. They move counter to the pedagogical norm and thus require a counter-cultural approach to typical OAE structures. It takes courage to break from a norm and suggest a different way of thinking. It also requires a level of divergent thinking. But if enough educators begin to make this shift, it can produce change over time.

As one example, a group of educators in the UK sought to break away from some of the norms within OAE as a way to encourage their participants, a multi-national group of outdoor educators, to develop pedagogical approaches that are more place-responsive. They took the group to Wild Ennerdale, a UK re-wilding project, and facilitated a number of activities with the intent of helping their students connect to

place, with the overarching question, “What kind of outdoor educator could you be here, in this valley?” The authors concluded “that a different outdoor educator can emerge when the norms of practice are withheld or challenged” (Towers and Loynes, 2017, p. 13).

These singular, subtle shifts will likely not alter ontological postures completely. But, as was the case for me, they may combine to produce a kind of orthodontic pressure that shifts perspectives slowly over time.

8.4.2 Create space for primary encounters

Parker Palmer defines teaching as “creat[ing] a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (1998, p. 90). Unpacking the concept of a “community of truth,” Palmer describes a web of relationships and suggests that we can only really know reality by being in community with it. Similar to Buber, Palmer’s work primarily focuses on ‘community’ as it relates to humans. Broadening the idea of community to include the more-than-human world, however, expands Palmer’s epistemology.

If we, as educators, have cultivated our own ontological postures in a way that allows for the relational dynamics and the autonomy of the more-than-human world, we carry a responsibility to create a space for primary encounters to occur. This does not mean that we “create encounters.” If an encounter is a primary experience, it is not something that we can create. But we can open a space that allows for encounters to occur.

Creating space is a rather abstract concept and, of course, taken literally is quite impossible. The previous chapter outlined some of the conditions that were part of my own primary encounters, including time, attention, and embodiment. Having an awareness of these conditions can assist pedagogues in creating space.

This can start with the way time is structured. Again referencing the autoethnographic data, I’m reminded of my encounters with the River. While I can’t recall specific incidents of facilitated space, I do remember that our expedition was facilitated in such a way that we were encouraged not to be driven by a destination or a goal. Instead, the focus was on the concept of a journey and what we experienced along the way. Our pace was leisurely, and this allowed us to be more present in our

environment and more in tune with the others who shared our environment. I believe the encounter I had with the River was partly due to this facilitated space.

Some of my early OAE training encouraged detailed planning of every aspect of an expedition. We were encouraged to make use of every bit of time to achieve a stated purpose. Unstructured time was seen as wasted opportunity. With an epistemology that stems from concrete experience, we were expected to create experiences that would lead to the kind of learning we were after. However, creating a packed agenda and having a plan for every bit of time stifles the potential for primary encounters. Unplanned time does not mean wasted time, and creating space allows for a less anthropocentric experience, inviting the more-than-human world to share and contribute. By building in unstructured time, we invite nature to become a co-teacher and allow space for complexity and spontaneity to surprise us with a primary encounter. As the educators who developed wild pedagogies have stated, "We believe that education is richer for all involved, if there is room left for surprise" (Kazi, 2023a). This correlates with Buber's suggestion that encounters catch us by surprise. They are not planned events, and they are not driven by human-centric agendas.

The amount of time spent in a particular place also plays a role. As the UK educators mentioned above suggest, "Short visits do not allow more nuanced narratives of a place to emerge, the unfolding of the seasons, encounters with others, sightings of wildlife, a familiarity with things and events. Longer visits and repeat encounters become important" (Towers and Loynes, 2017, p. 13).

In the context of primary encounters, I would suggest that in addition to having unstructured time and longer visits, creating space involves being present and attentive to others who share the same space and recognizing our mutual autonomy and agency. This leads to an awareness of how I impact the other, and vice versa. For outdoor adventure education specifically, creating this kind of space will require an agenda that has room for interruptions. This attentiveness can be facilitated through orienting activities that introduce us to a particular place and encourage us to recognize the autonomy of the others who share the space and/or depend on it. One activity I have begun to incorporate is a simple journaling activity. I ask students to bring a blank notebook and pencil and focus on a particular object or element in the environment. I then have them write a journal entry from the perspective of that object. While it could

be argued that this is a form of anthropomorphizing, I find that it helps my students see the place differently—to think about what occurs there on a daily basis, who the other members of that place's community might be, and how their presence might be felt.

Embodiment can also play a role, and pedagogues can find ways to highlight aspects of embodiment to create awareness of how our physical bodies are impacted by the elements around us and vice versa. The River vignette provided a stark example of this, but embodiment also happens in more subtle ways—the feel of the trail underfoot, the smell of the air, the vibrancy and contrast of colours and textures. These things impact the way we experience our surroundings and the sense we make of our experiences, and greater awareness can set the stage for primary encounters.

8.4.3 Ecological construction of meanings

At the beginning of this chapter, I explored some of the epistemological structures that have historically influenced our understanding of the construction of meaning. It is beyond the scope of this project to discuss all the scholarship that surrounds the ways in which humans construct meaning. I will acknowledge here that this capacity exists for humans, and that we construct meaning in different ways at different times and in different places. Earlier we discussed individual vs. social construction and some of the philosophical debates that surround a human capacity to know. Historically, these debates have come from a substance-based ontology and from the assumption that only humans possess agency.

Changing our ontological structures and acknowledging the agency of the more-than-human world allows non-humans to have a role in constructing meaning. From a pedagogy standpoint, OAE pedagogues can begin by creating a space for primary encounters. We then need to recognize when primary encounters occur and help facilitate a mutual construction that includes the more-than-human world. This moves us beyond individual construction, beyond social construction, and towards an ecological construction of meanings that is place-inclusive.

Constructing meaning begins with understanding the features that make up a primary encounter, as discussed in chapter 6, and the conditions that inspire a primary encounter, as discussed in chapter 7. An awareness of these features and conditions and the relational dynamics that accompany them provides the educator with an

opportunity to construct meanings through a *knowing-with* approach. This will necessarily involve metaphysical imagination, as we entertain metaphysical holism and consider the ways in which this connects to our identity and well-being.

The ability to construct meanings in this way suggests an ontological posture that acknowledges the primacy of relations. Thus, the pedagogical application of primary encounters is cyclical.

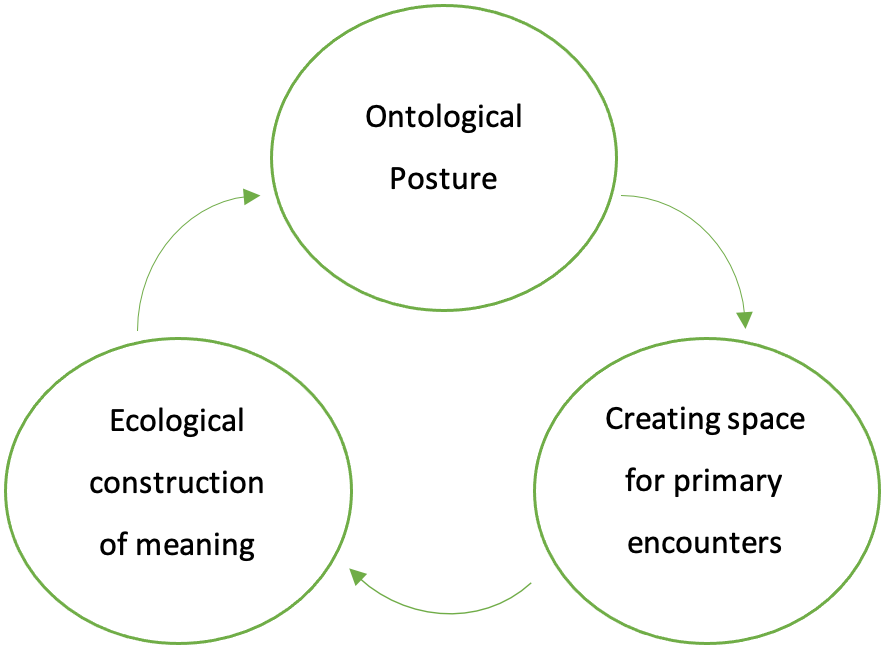

Figure 5: A pedagogical model for primary encounters

I do not suggest this pedagogical model as a replacement for other experiential learning models. Rather, I suggest this as a way to conceive of 'nature as co-teacher' that begins with changing ontological postures, which can happen through primary encounters.

8.5 Summary

The intent of this chapter was to provide practical implications for the conceptual model of primary encounters. Pedagogues, when faced with new concepts and ideas, are naturally drawn to ask the question, "How do we do it?" Here I've suggested that a primary encounter is not something that one "does;" rather, primary encounters happen to us through the work of developing new ontological postures and creating space. Having a primary encounter involves a certain level of awareness,

attention to place and to the more-than-human world (including embodiment), and a period of time through which this is cultivated. Pedagogy can play a role in creating space for these encounters and in helping fellow learners construct encounters in ways that involve the more-than-human world as an active agent in the construction. Approaching learning in this way extends place-based education to become place-inclusive, inviting nature as co-teacher, and further developing ontological postures that cultivate awareness for future primary encounters. The role that primary encounters plays in relational reciprocity addresses the pedagogy-value gap by becoming more inclusive of the more-than-human world and allowing space for the development of virtues that can lead to an ethic of care.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to offer a phenomenological enquiry into human relationships with the more-than-human world in the context of outdoor adventure education. The research began by problematizing the notion that outdoor adventure education experiences lead to an ethical stance that inspires pro-environmental behaviours. A review of the social and cultural aims from which OAE sprung in the early 1900s reveal largely anthropocentric motivations for combining education with outdoor adventure. While there are some studies that explore aspects of human-nature relations, these studies assume 'relationship' as something positive. The pilot study I conducted (described in more detail in Chapter 10) further suggested that English-speaking humans don't have adequate language to describe the relational dynamics at play between themselves and the more-than-human world.

As a result of the socio-cultural analysis and the literature review, this thesis has sought to explore the question, "How can outdoor adventure education be used to cultivate relationships with the more-than-human world that result in an eco-centric environmental ethos?" This chapter summarizes the results of the research, discusses limitations of the research, and offers suggestions for future research.

9.1 Summary of results

To address this question I relied on phenomenological methods within the tradition of continental philosophy, combined with an analysis from autoethnography. Coming from a post-qualitative and (new) materialist theoretical stance, I made no attempt to analyse objectively, instead using my own experiences to help test and illustrate the conceptual framework of primary encounters. This framework was developed by synthesizing Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, the phenomenology of experiences of sublime nature, and relational ontology arising from indigenous ontologies. These three themes were analysed individually and then combined to propose primary encounters as a conceptual framework that offers a non-anthropocentric notion of human relationships with the more-than-human world.

Through my synthesis, I identified 4 features that constitute a primary encounter:

1. An experience of metaphysical holism, which includes;
2. A temporary and unexpected erasure of space-time boundaries, which leads to;
3. An adoption of relational reciprocity which:
    - Recognizes the agency of the other and,
    - Embraces a piece of shared identity with the other;
4. Resulting in virtues of humility, respect, and care that inspires behaviours stemming from a sense of responsibility for the other.

I then suggested how these features are experienced through a three-stage process that constitutes a primary encounter. Examples from autoethnography were provided as a way to illustrate and test the conceptual framework and also to contextualize it within outdoor adventure education. Finally, I suggested ways in which primary encounters might help inform OAE pedagogy, with a specific focus on wild pedagogies. The suggested model constituted a cyclical process in which ontological postures create space for primary encounters which leads to a place-inclusive, ecological construction of meaning, further informing ontological postures.

9.2 Implications of the research

The conceptual framework presented here has the potential to impact human relationships with the more-than-human world through a focus on virtue ethics and the process of humility leading to respect, care, love, and responsibility in relational reciprocity. A pedagogical approach that creates space for primary encounters to occur and recognizes the agency of the more-than-human world shifts the focus from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism—recognizing both humans and non-humans and encouraging a knowing-with epistemological approach. I am not suggesting a full abandonment of the traditional aims of OAE that focus on character development. Rather, I am suggesting a *both-and* approach that acknowledges both human and non-human agency and the primacy of relations that make humans members of the ecological community. The process of encounter acts as a gateway towards new ontological postures and a construction of meaning that acknowledges the agency of

the more-than-human world and the responsibility humans carry to respect and care for our non-human communities.

There are further implications related to our constructions of a sense of place and concepts of adventure. Applying the conceptual model to OAE allows for ecological relationships to have more emphasis and involvement in the education. The notion of place and how we construct meanings related to place is also impacted. This also implicates the idea of wilderness and sublime locations as being wild and dangerous. Constructions of place that emerge from primary encounters have the potential to create meanings of place that both recognize danger and also inspire wonder through mystery, leading to respect and care vs. fear and defensiveness.

9.3 Contributions of the research

My literature review highlighted a need for research that addresses onto-epistemological foundations of OAE and develops metaphysics that re-imagines human-nature relations. This research has addressed this need and filled a gap in the literature by offering a new conceptual framework of relationships that cultivate relational reciprocity and an ethic of care. The framework rests on ontological pluralism that acknowledges the primacy of relations and enables a knowing-with approach to epistemology and knowledge construction. In addition, the research represents a multi-disciplinary synthesis of ideas that have not previously been synthesized.

The evolution of pedagogy within OAE illustrates a movement towards educational methods that recognize the role of place. My research deepens this movement to create stronger philosophical foundations for these methods, reconciling problematic contradictions between new methodology and traditional philosophic assumptions. Acknowledging the possibility of relational ontology helps to satisfy the epistemological challenges inherent within transcendent experiences and metaphysical holism that are products of a primary encounter. From a purely substance-based ontology, the kind of metaphysical holism that overwhelms mental faculties creates an inability to know-about or know-of. If these, however, are approached with an openness to relational ontology, there exists a knowing-with source of knowledge that remains accessible.

9.4 Limitations of the research

A conceptual framework is just that—conceptual. The findings presented are based on my own analysis of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, experiences of the natural sublime, and relational ontology. I do not claim to have exhausted the literature of these topics in my analysis.

Martin Buber wrote hundreds of texts, many of which have not been translated from the original German. For the sake of brevity I chose to focus almost solely on *I and Thou*, which is generally recognized as Buber's seminal work. Much more could certainly be added by exploring Buber's other writings. Mostly absent from my analysis are critiques of Buber's work, many of which focus on inconsistencies between Buber's claim of holism and the duality he presents between I-It and I-You. In addition to this, some critics take offense at Buber's elevation of I-You over I-It, claiming that this disparages the value of scientific knowledge. I believe Buber was attempting to highlight a particular phenomenon (the I-You mode of relating) through contrast, rather than setting up a duality. Still, this thesis does not thoroughly address these critiques.

Similarly, my analysis of the natural sublime does not exhaust the literature. I focus mostly on secondary sources related to the phenomenon of the natural sublime. A deeper analysis into these sources, specifically focusing on the writings of Kant, might illuminate certain features of sublime experiences that have not otherwise surfaced. I chose instead to benefit from the work of others in this regard.

For the purposes of this project, I focused on the natural sublime as it has been described in western, Euro-centric thought. The phenomenon may be understood and described much differently in eastern and/or indigenous thought. Similarly, the concept of relational ontology, while addressed here from the perspective of western indigenous scholars, is likely construed much differently in eastern philosophy.

In the chapter on pedagogy, I chose to focus specifically on wild pedagogies. There are other relevant pedagogical approaches to consider, including rewilding education, ecoliteracy, and environmental education. While this could expand concepts and applications, I chose to stay narrow in focus here for the sake of simplicity.

Lastly, while I have offered an autoethnographic study as a means of testing and illustrating the framework, much more empirical research will be needed to validate the conceptual framework, which will be discussed next.

9.5 Suggestions for future research

The limitations discussed above reveal opportunities for future research. Philosophically, a deeper dive into the work of Immanuel Kant might be revealing, particularly due to Kant's influence on Martin Buber. In addition to this, an exploration of experiences of the sublime in nature and relational ontology from eastern philosophy would undoubtedly add a richness to Buber's notion of an I-You mode of relating and relational reciprocity.

Empirically, further research that evaluates the occurrences of primary encounters in outdoor adventure education would help to illustrate how and when primary encounters occur and whether or not they result in an eco-centric ethic that stems from virtues. Some further questions that this research highlights include:

- What are the prime conditions for a primary encounter to occur?
- How does the experience of time impact the occurrence of a primary encounter?
- What is the role of an educator in creating a space for primary encounters to occur?
- What is the result—short- and long-term—of a primary encounter on human ethical constructions and behaviours?
- How do people describe primary encounters? What new language might be needed?
- How do primary encounters impact a sense of place?

To address some of these questions, it might be possible to convert the features of a primary encounter into a survey tool, possibly combining it with other tools like the nature relatedness scale (Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy, 2009), to evaluate occurrences and their effects on pro-environmental behaviours.

9.6 Final thoughts

This enquiry began out of curiosity—a curiosity grounded in relationality. Personally, the curiosity stemmed from my own experience of differing relational dynamics with the more-than-human world and an awareness that I did not have language for what I had experienced. Professionally, I was curious about the role OAE might play in the preservation and care of the more-than-human world. More than that, though, I was worried that OAE might be blindly contributing to the problem. I still worry about this, and I'm seeing evidence of an increasingly consumerist society seeing the natural world as a playground that is impermeable to human impact.

I'm reminded of the day before the Oak fell. Seeing her broken roots that day, I worried for her future. But I didn't know it was imminent. Similarly, we have recognized the negative impacts we are having on our planet. We see what is happening, but habits are slow to change, especially if it involves giving up hard-earned comfort and convenience. If we could see the future, is the planet's demise imminent? If we knew that, what would we change?

Living in the United States, there are constant cries for freedom and independence, claims that these are the values upon which our country was founded. I can't help but wonder if we are mistakenly defining freedom as independence. What if freedom, true freedom, was found in interdependence? Upon mutual reciprocity? Wouldn't that free us from the constant fear that drives anger and hate?

Robin Wall Kimmerer, who is both a botanist and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, discusses the reciprocal nature of the gift economy in contrast with a market-based economy. "A gift creates ongoing relationship" (2013, p. 20) she notes, and illustrates further with the following example:

> Sweetgrass belongs to Mother Earth. Sweetgrass pickers collect properly and respectfully, for their own use and the needs of their community. They return a gift to the earth and tend to the well-being of the *wiingashk*. The braids are given as gifts, to honor, to say thank you, to heal and to strengthen. The sweetgrass is kept in motion… That is the fundamental nature of gifts: they move, and their value increases with their passage…

> From the viewpoint of a private property economy, the "gift" is deemed to be "free" because we obtain it free of charge, at no cost. But in the gift economy, gifts are not free. The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a "bundle of rights," whereas in a gift economy property has a "bundle of responsibilities" attached (2013, pp. 27–28).

This is Kimmerer's gift to us. Having curated her own ontological posture, she offers us a picture of reciprocity that perpetuates in generosity and relationship. Reciprocity, the gift economy, are driven by responsibility—a sense of respect and care that grows out of relationship.

This is my gift, my responsibility. May it inspire more curiosities, more gifts, and greater responsibility.

Chapter 10: Reflections on Methodology

The methodology used in this thesis is two-fold and stems from my theoretical position in post-qualitative analysis. To begin, I conducted a philosophical desk study that involved three parts: an analysis of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue as presented in *I and Thou*, an enquiry into the phenomenological features involved in experiences of the natural sublime, and a survey of relational ontology and indigenous ontologies. The results of this desk study make up the content of part 2.

In an effort to contextualize the research of the desk study, I conducted an autoethnographic study of my own relational encounters with the more-than-human world. Part of the autoethnographic research includes an historical and cultural analysis of Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE), which is outlined in chapter 2. This analysis also serves to problematize the concept that relationships arising out of OAE experiences lead to the kind of ethical stance that would inspire pro-environmental behaviours. Chapter 7 summarizes the results of the autoethnographic data and attempts to both illustrate and test the conceptual model of primary encounters which is presented in chapter 6.

In this chapter, I outline more specifically the methodology that was employed, the rationale behind various methodological decisions, and how these two methodological frameworks combine under the umbrella of existential phenomenology.

10.1 Phenomenology

In the opening chapter I provided an overview of phenomenology as both a philosophical enquiry and a qualitative research method. In my employment of phenomenology, I have sought to give voice to human experiences (perceived and actual) with the more-than-human world and how these experiences translate into relationality. This was achieved through a philosophical desk study and then supported with narrative enquiry based in autoethnography, which served to breathe life into and reflexively explore the philosophical propositions and resulting conceptual model. Having already defined phenomenology in detail in the opening chapter (see section

1.7), it will help to briefly discuss the pilot study as a context for the choice to use autoethnography.

10.2 The pilot study

In an attempt to apply phenomenology as a research method, I did a pilot study in the spring of 2019 with a small group of college students from the program where I was teaching at the time. Through a semi-structured interview process, I intended to record how students in an outdoor leadership degree program would describe their relationship with the more-than-human world, and what experiences led to the development of that relationship.

I found this to be exceedingly difficult. It became clear that participants didn't have the vocabulary to describe a quality of relationship; most simply used the word 'good', or some similar adjective, without going into much detail about what 'good' actually means. Is it 'good' because you had an experience with nature and survived? Is it 'good' because you've had nice holidays in the natural environment? Or maybe it taught you something about yourself that you may not have learned otherwise? And what is the result of 'good'? What does it lead to? Any changes in behaviour?

Of course, I couldn't directly ask any of these questions as they would be too leading and may not invite authentic responses. I knew from my own experience that my relationship with the more-than-human world had changed from when I first started participating in outdoor adventure education. I also knew that describing the relationship, and how it changed, was nearly impossible to do without using metaphor.

I considered changing my methodology to utilize photo elicitation, video diaries, or other forms of connecting concepts metaphorically. However, the problem was not just with the tool. The problem seemed to also be connected to language—specifically, with a lack of language. As I continued to sort through how I might explain my relationships (plural, as this has changed over time and changes with environments) with the more-than-human world, I was struck by the illusiveness inherent in 'relationship' and the challenge I faced with finding the right words, or even the right metaphors.

I am not a linguist. But I have dabbled in languages and translations—enough to know that where some languages are rich in their ability to describe certain

phenomena, others seem less adequate. One example that stands out as it relates to the more-than-human world is the richness of American indigenous languages. I am enamoured by Robin Wall-Kimmerer's depiction of her experiences learning her native tongue from the elders of her Potawatomi tribe (2013). In her depiction, Kimmerer critiques the English language and its inability to describe human to more-than-human relationship as animistic. Kimmerer compares the indigenous language of her people to the English language, noting that,

> English doesn't give us many tools for incorporating respect for animacy. In English, you are either a human or a thing. Our grammar boxes us in by the choice of reducing a nonhuman being to an *it*, or it must be gendered, inappropriately, as a *he* or *she…* The arrogance of English is that the only way to be animate, to be worthy of respect and moral concern, is to be a human (2013, pp. 56–57).

Norwegian is another language that seems superior to English in this regard. The first time I encountered the Norwegian term *friluftlsliv* was in 2008 at the international conference of the Association for Experiential Education. The Marina Ewald and Kurt Hahn Address that year was given by Bob Henderson, who at the time was a professor at McMaster University in Canada. Bob's talk was centred around some of the work he had been doing in Norway and Canada related to simplicity and authenticity in outdoor education. *Friluftsliv*, Bob explained, is a Norwegian word that has no direct translation in English. Norwegians use the word to describe a certain type of interaction with the more-than-human world. It implies a certain knowledge of place, and a relationship with place that is more transformational than transactional (Henderson, 2008).

David Abram (2017) examines this from the perspective of the alphabet and the literate world. After a summary of both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's work, Abram provides a brief survey of the history of the modern English alphabet, noting its roots in early symbols that visually represented aspects of the more-than-human world. Abram makes the argument that this visual transition in our written language has contributed to a human perception of being separate and disconnected from the more-than-human world.

This linguistical dilemma is a problem for another project, and I have not studied linguistics to a sufficient degree to offer any helpful solutions. However, this side

excursion into linguistics helped me to see that an interview approach may not allow a full or satisfactory analysis of the research question.

10.3 The decision to use autoethnography

As I sorted through the data from my pilot study and realized that this particular approach was not going to work, I went back to my original research question and my proposal. The purpose of the study is to understand place relations—specifically: the nature of these relationships, how they are formed, the role that social & historical constructions and pedagogy play in our developing relationships, the transference of relationship from one place to another, and how this all impacts our environmental behaviours.

In many ways, these questions were rooted in my own experiences. Through living and working in a variety of different biomes and experimenting with different pedagogical approaches in the context of OAE, I had seen my own relationship with the more-than-human world change over time. While I knew this to be true, I didn't know for certain what factors lead to the change. Perhaps, I thought, I could study the change in myself with the hope of providing a new theoretical paradigm through which could develop a future qualitative study with a group of participants.

A literature review exploring autoethnography and OAE research—including human-nature connections and biophilia—revealed both a lack of autoethnographic research in this area and a recommendation for using autoethnography to research OAE and its effect on promoting pro-environmental behaviours (Nicol, 2013).

Autoethnography is described by Reed-Denahay as "involv[ing] a critical study of yourself in relation to one or more cultural context(s)" (1997, p. 9). Evolving from other forms of ethnographic research, autoethnography was partially a response to what some researchers refer to as the "crisis of confidence" (Hughes and Pennington, 2018). This crisis was due in part to an increasing awareness of the illusion of objectivity in qualitative research. Anthropology had risen in an attempt to 'give voice' to the 'other', ethnography being one of the primary research methods used. In addition to the question of objectivity, researchers became increasingly aware of the power dynamics at play in traditional ethnographic research, which was often manifested as researchers from a dominant class studying an oppressed population for their own interests.

Autoethnography emerged into the research scene in the 1970's, and created some promise as an approach that "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (as quoted in Hughes and Pennington, 2018, pp. 9–10).

As noted in chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter, my own philosophical assumptions related to this research project deny that research can ever be fully objective. Combined with this assumption is the nature of the research question itself, which is focused on relationships. Relationships are highly subjective and varied. An authentic approach to this research project demands a methodology that allows for subjectivity and reflexivity. In addition, Rossman and Rallis provide connections between autoethnography and phenomenology, particularly existential phenomenology and lived experiences (Rossman and Rallis, 2020). These factors provide a strong rationale for utilizing autoethnography as a context for illustrating the philosophical analysis of relationships with the more-than-human world.

Hughes and Pennington (2018) identify over 20 different types of autoethnography, highlighting differences between reflexive styles, analysis, and interpretation. The type of autoethnography I chose to engage in falls under the category of interpretative autoethnography. Denzen defines interpretive autoethnography as "a critical performative practice, a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology" (as quoted in Hughes and Pennington, 2018, p. 20). While Denzen suggests that interpretive autoethnography begins with the biography of the writer, I have chosen instead to begin with a historical and cultural analysis of outdoor adventure education which has had a significant amount of influence on my own experiences in OAE.

To summarize, my methodology utilises both philosophical phenomenology and interpretive autoethnography. Related to various perspectives within philosophical phenomenology, my research follows the assumptions of Merleau-Ponty; namely, the interplay between embodiment and perception and our inability to separate these two modes of existence as we construct meaning. Given the nature of my own experiences and how they have influenced my relationship with the more-than-human world,

interpretive autoethnography is applied to provide a means to both test and illustrate the phenomenological concepts that emerge.

10.3.1 The process

My career in outdoor adventure education began in earnest in 2001. Since that time, I have led hundreds of expeditions across the United States and Canada. To keep the dataset manageable, I chose to focus on two expeditions that represent my initiation into outdoor adventure education and some relevant subsequent data from later journals. Described briefly in chapters 1 and 7, these two expeditions were part of a 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum where I learned about adventure education theory, educational philosophy, and the role of an instructor within OAE experiences. The first expedition was split into two phases: a short, 5-day snowshoeing trip followed by a longer, 14-day backcountry skiing expedition in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Contrasting this experience, the second expedition took place in the desert of southwest Texas and also consisted of two phases: a 5-day backpacking trip in the Chisos Mountains followed by 14 days of canoeing down the Rio Grande River.

I chose to focus on these two expeditions for several reasons. First, they represent the very beginning of my OAE career and were heavily shaped by the historical and cultural influences of traditional OAE, specifically Outward Bound. Second, I was very disciplined on these expeditions with journaling. I journaled nearly every day, noting the experiences of the day and reflecting on these experiences in my own growth and development as a leader. Our group of students also kept a group journal during these two expeditions, rotating the role of author each day in a way that captured the voice of our collective learning. This combined with my memories of that time provided rich data for analysis. And lastly, my current perspectives in OAE have been heavily influenced by these two expeditions but have also changed in significant ways that can be illustrated by comparing the data from these journals with more recent journaling.

Thus, my dataset for the autoethnography consisted of personal journal entries from 2001, a group journal account of these two expeditions, more recent journal entries, and a timeline memory writing exercise (described in more detail below). These various data sources (internal data) combined with the historical and social analysis

conducted in chapter 2 and the desk study that is woven throughout the thesis (external data) provides an assemblage of data to address concerns of validity. Hughes and Pennington describe assemblage as "a collection of multiple items that fit together to provide multiple perspectives and a rich multilayered account of a particular time, place, or moment in the history of the autoethnographer and his or her profession" (2018, p. 61). In my case, the assemblage of data represents a particular phenomenon of lived experience.

10.3.2 Data assemblage

To address any concerns with research rigour and validity, it will be helpful to offer a bit more detail regarding data collection and how it connects to assemblage and validity. Hughes and Pennington (2018) suggest eight tasks of data assemblage that should be considered by the researcher. These tasks, which the authors acknowledge as being adapted from Denshire and Lee (2013), include: 1) selecting relevant journal articles, 2) producing twice-told narratives, 3) straddling multiple temporalities, 4) producing personal-professional history, 5) crafting [non]fictions, 6) critical/analytical commenting back to the profession, and 8) reinscribing aspects of practice. I'll address each of these in turn and provide examples of how I've addressed each of these tasks within the thesis.

Selecting relevant journal articles

I would suggest that for this project 'relevant journal articles' could be extended to include philosophical texts due to the connection with phenomenology. For this task, I conducted a literature review to explore research related to nature connectedness, sense of place, place-based pedagogies, biophilia, indigenous ontologies, relational ontology, the natural sublime, and Martin Buber's I-You encounters. Rather than having a chapter dedicated to my literature review, these resources are instead referenced throughout the thesis to provide a more streamlined reading experience.

I acknowledge that this list of topics represents an overwhelming amount of research to sift through. I do not claim to have thoroughly or systematically exhausted the research on any of these topics. Rather, my intent was to explore the intersection of these ideas. Given this, my literature review was targeted and focused on how these

topics inform the lived experience of humans in the context of outdoor adventure education.

Producing twice-told narratives, straddling multiple temporalities, and producing personal-professional history

The second, third, and fourth tasks were combined in my data collection strategies. As mentioned previously, I kept a meticulous reflective journal during the two expeditions from my wilderness practicum experience. These journals represented one piece of data, however another piece of data that was important for the research came from my memories of the two expeditions and the 6-month experience in general. Since my research is concerned with how my relationship with the more-than-human world has changed over time, it was important for me to be able to compare current memories, which are arguably unreliable and have been influenced by years of social and cultural construction, with in-the-moment reflections of the experience from my journals.

To accomplish this, prior to reviewing my journals (which I had not looked at since I'd written them in 2001), I engaged in a free-writing exercise to create a timeline memory. Chang (2008) suggests assembling a timeline memory as a way to access and provide structure to personal memories that are relevant to the research project. My timeline memory was targeted; it began with my 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum experience and extended from there to other experiences that connected to my relationship with the more-than-human world. I did this as a free-writing exercise to maintain focus on the memories without feeling a need to edit for clarity or grammar (see Appendix A for a copy of the timeline memory).

After completing the timeline memory, I began reviewing my personal journals and our group journal authored by the students and leaders in my cohort. I first made an audio-recording of myself reading the journals. This allowed me to analyse the content while walking outside, which was important to me given my topic. Listening to my journals while walking outside involved a sort of embodied experience, intermixing the historic data with a current embodiment with the more-than-human world. I also transcribed the journals into a Word document so that I could analyse the data with Nvivo. I transcribed the group journals for analysis in Nvivo as well.

The last bit of data involved more recent journal entries, specifically those related to my connections with the Oak tree and other references to the Sky. Journal entries for this dataset were chosen based on relevance and thus represent a sort of judgment sampling related to data collection.

These pieces of data reflect multiple temporalities (writing in the present, writings from the past, memories of the past, reflecting on the future), and the timeline memory combined with journals from 2001 represent twice-told narratives as well as the task of producing a personal-professional history.

Crafting [non]fictions and [auto]ethnographic writing about practice

These tasks were accomplished primarily through data analysis. I experimented with several techniques of data analysis. First, I listened to audio recordings of the journals while walking in nature and jotted down themes that emerged after returning from the walk. Researchers have shown that walking in nature has positive effects on creativity (Oppezzo and Schwartz, 2014), and, specifically given my research topic, I was hoping that this practice might help to highlight themes that I may not have otherwise noticed. One theme that emerged to me through this practice was connected to my encounter with the River. There were not specific words or phrases within my journals that highlighted this; rather, it emerged through a description of overlapping experiences with the River (feelings of humility due to lack of technical abilities, exhilaration of speed and successfully navigating through rapids, a sense of solitude at the River's quieter edges, etc). The degree of embodiment and dependence that was part of my encounter with the River was evident when listening in ways that didn't necessarily emerge through other forms of analysis.

In addition to listening to audio recordings, I also used Nvivo to analyse the data. I conducted a line-by-line analysis first, noting words and phrases related to awe, sublime, beauty, and descriptions of specific aspects of the more-than-human world. I then merged these things into themes, and the theme of the Sky connected to a sense of awe quickly emerged. This informed my third vignette about the Sky, which was then analysed against the features of primary encounters presented from the desk study. There were other themes that also emerged from the Nvivo analysis—the contrast between a cold and warm environment, the magic and hardship of snow, etc.—

however, for the sake of brevity, I chose to focus on just the Sky for this particular project.

The vignette about the Oak came about very differently. The fateful day of her passing in May of 2016 left a deep imprint on me and generated a type of grief that I had never experienced. The timeline memory exercise helped to reveal the depth of this emotion, and this data combined with more recent journal entries that were gathered through judgement sampling from the years of living with the Oak. Since this dataset was gathered thematically, the analysis happened in conjunction with data selection.

Critical/analytical writing about practice

The process of first discussing historical and cultural influences on OAE, developing a framework of primary encounters to inform human-nature relations, and illustrating/testing this framework through autoethnography provided an ability to return to the context of OAE and how pedagogy can position itself towards more place-inclusive practices. While this thesis has explored a number of meandering paths, it has emerged from, interacted with, and returned to pedagogical practices and philosophical foundations within OAE. This context has provided the thread of continuity by applying a 'what, so what, now what' approach to the research question: How can outdoor adventure education be used to cultivate relationships with the more-than-human world that result in an eco-centric environmental ethos? The focus here has been on the nature and quality of 'relationship' and how this unfolds phenomenologically through pedagogy.

Reinscribing aspects of practice

Chapter 8 is focused on how the results of the research might inform approaches to pedagogy within OAE experiences. The intent is not to suggest a new formula or method for teaching; rather, what I've attempted to do is inform onto-epistemological foundations in order to better position teaching methods such as wild pedagogies for cultivating the kinds of human-nature relationships that lead to an eco-centric ethos and environmental conscious behaviours. This is how I've applied the task of reinscribing aspects of practice, which was informed by the lack of research in this area.

10.3.3 Member checking

Member checking is common in qualitative research as a way to verify data analysis and provide stronger validity to related conclusions. This can be challenging with autoethnography, but some researchers have suggested collaboration as a form of member checking for this methodology (Hughes and Pennington, 2018). In my case, collaboration happened through tutorials with my supervisor in which he would suggest different ways of interpreting certain phenomena. I also met regularly with a friend for accountability and goal-setting, and she was also a student on the 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum. She provided helpful collaboration and re-direction several times throughout the course of this project.

10.4 Research ethics

Obtaining ethics approval for autoethnography would seem to be straightforward. The research and the participant are the same person in this regard, so what is there to approve? However, through the process of reading research related to autoethnography, it became apparent to me that there are still ethical concerns with this methodology. Our stories, after all, are connected to other stories and other, possibly conflicting, interpretations of shared stories.

This is referred to by researchers as “relational ethics,” which acknowledges and respects the connectedness between the researcher and the communities in which she lives, works, and finds meaning. Many autoethnographic researchers study topics that are highly controversial, politically charged, and/or deeply troubling (experiences of racism, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc). Strong emotions are often tied to this kind of research, and the researcher has to be mindful of the social and cultural connections that the research may effect (Hughes and Pennington, 2018).

Specific to my research, I recognize that my memories and interpretations of my 6-month wilderness leadership programme are likely different than those of my fellow travellers. Because of this, and especially since the group journal my fellow travellers and I co-authored was one of my data sources, my ethics application needed to reflect this confluence and possible conflict of memories and interpretations. To satisfy this, I developed a consent that included information about the research and sent it to my

fellow students and instructors from the 6-Month Wilderness Leadership Practicum cohort (see Appendix B for a copy of the participant information sheet and consent form). The information on the form acknowledges that my research involves shared memories, and my perspective may be different than the perspectives of my fellow students from that time.[25] I have also, where applicable, changed the names of those who were part of my experience to protect their privacy.

10.5 Legitimizing the method

I would like to add one final note on legitimizing autoethnography as a method. Hughes and Pennington (2018) suggest the process of reflexivity that is inherent in autoethnography provides a natural bridge to traditional means of evaluating research. "Reflexivity is commonly used in qualitative research and has been posited and accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to legitimize, validate, and question research practices and representations" (2018, p. 94).

The authors further analyse the utility of autoethnography against the Council of the American Education Research Association (AERA) publication standards for empirical research. The standards include the following areas of evaluation: 1) problem formation; 2) design and logic of the study; 3) sources of evidence; 4) measurement and classification; 5) analysis and interpretation; 6) generalization; 7) ethics in reporting; and 8) title, abstract, and heading. These 8 standards were combined into 4 evaluative features that can be used to legitimize autoethnographic research and provide a means for editors and reviewers to evaluate manuscripts for publication (Table 2).

[25] I also completed an ethics application for the pilot study and collected consent forms from students to participate. These are not included in this project since I chose not to use or analyse that data.

Table 2: Utility of autoethnography against AERA publishing standards (as quoted in Hughes and Pennington, 2018, pp. 106–107)

Focus	Indicators
Formulating social scientific problems	• The manuscript summarizes the author's key claims. • The manuscript describes the author's study design and methodological choices. (2006 AERA Standards 1, 2)
Facilitating critical, careful, and thoughtful discussion of methodological choices and claims	• The manuscript asks critical questions about the autoethnographic text's design and logic, including epistemological, ontological, and/or axiological moorings. • The manuscript guides discussion and/or other activities on the relationship between the author's methodological choices and the truth claims made in the text. (2006 AERA Standards 2, 3, 6)
Offering multiple levels of critique, naming privilege, penalty, units of study, and classifications; and criteria for selected units and classifications	• The manuscript guides discussion about the units of study (sites, groups, participants, events, and other units), and the means through which they were selected is adequately described; the manuscript offers adequate information regarding the collection of data or empirical materials. • The manuscript names and offers multiple levels of critiques (i.e., personal, dyadic, group, and institutional); it discussed the relevant methodological dilemmas and complications of the position of the researcher as the center of the project. (2006 AERA Standards 3, 4, 5)
Conducting credible analysis and interpretation of evidence from narratives and connecting them to researcher-self via triangulation, member checks, and related ethical issues	• The manuscript guides discussion on the relationships between the researcher-based narratives and other texts/narratives explored in the manuscript. • The manuscript addresses the practical aspects of the autoethnography (e.g., ethical considerations, logistical issues, political realities, and related confidentiality issues). (2006 AERA Standards 5, 6, 7)

I offer this model as an evaluative tool for the research presented in this thesis and in defence of the validity of a post-qualitative approach to research. I have used these evaluative criteria to structure much of my thesis and ensure that it meets published criteria of rigour and research integrity.

10.6 Summary

The two-fold approach to methodology in this project combines phenomenology with autoethnography to produce the conceptual framework of primary encounters. The intent is to suggest a certain mode of relating that impacts our ontological posture in such a way as to foreground relational reciprocity between humans and the more-than-human world. The assumption is that this mode of relating allows humans to experience a sense of humility and wonder that leads to an ethic of respect and care for the more-than-human world and ultimately results in pro-environmental behaviours.

Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline Memory[26]

It was a snowy morning, driving up to the chain of lakes in Wisconsin. I don't remember where I stayed the night before… probably with Beth in Indiana. I remember thinking as I drove up that I wanted this to be different. I reflected on life in Colorado, growing up "outdoorsy", and the culture of the Colorado outdoor lifestyle. I wanted to experience something that was free of the comparison and competition, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was that was problematic about that. I only knew that it didn't feel right, didn't feel authentic. I wanted something authentic, something that would speak to my soul and would connect with me spiritually.

I don't remember the initial arrival, checking in… the first thing I remember was being at Rob's house (was it for dinner? Or dessert?). We sat in his living room—Rob's deep blue eyes were peering out at us from under his peaked felt hat—and I thought to myself "he's like Santa Claus." We had a discussion about what had brought us there, what we hoped to gain. I remember feeling a little nervous that I was one of only two who had never before been to Honey Rock, I and didn't know the others in the room. Jake was the only other newcomer. I don't remember what I said, but my memory today tells me that I simply wanted something different. I wanted an authentic experience, I wanted to learn, I wanted to change and grow. Later, after that chat in Rob's house, we played Broomball. I had never played before, and I loved it. Jen was the goalkeeper, and we chatted some and laughed, and I learned that it was her birthday.

Over the next couple of days we prepared for our first expedition. I was most nervous for this one—5 days of snowshoeing & backpacking in the winter, followed by a 14-day winter expedition on skis. My only other winter camping experience had not been good, and I was nervous about being cold. We laughed as we packed, modeling our various winter layers—hats and googles and balaclavas. Our instructors, Sara and Preston, discussed layering with us and the two biggest health risks we would likely

[26] This was written through a process of stream-of-consciousness. Grammatical errors are present and intentionally ignored. Names have been changed to protect identities.

face—hypothermia and frostbite. Secretly, I sized the others up by the quality of their gear, a habit that I didn't even know I had developed and wasn't really conscious of.

One day we were told to dress as if we would be cross-country skiing, with a swimsuit underneath, and told to bring a separate set of warmer clothes—something that we might put on in the evening after skiing. I don't remember if we were told what exactly we would be doing. If we were, some in the group had a sense for what was to come. I didn't. We walked together out onto the ice of Long Lake, about 50 feet from shore, where a large square had been cut in the ice. One-by-one, we took turns jumping into the icy waters, then getting back out and changing clothes. It was a bonding experience, a change to feel the effects of a dropping body temperature; cold, wet clothes; and the sensation of changing into warmer, dry clothes. I think the intention was to help us understand that we could mitigate being cold, even in extreme circumstances. But the experience, more than anything, created group bonding and gave us each a little badge of honor that we had done that, and that we had an ability to survive the extremes of nature. After everyone had a turn, we marched back to the dining hall for some hot cocoa, before heading in to take hot showers. Later we debriefed the experience, but I don't remember that part.

I think the day was sunny and cold when we left on that first 5 days of snowshoeing. I only really remember that because of a picture that lingers in my memory, that I have in a scrapbook somewhere. We hiked to Black Bear cabin that night. An unexpected surprise for me, who had never been there. Others knew where we were going, or at least suspected, but didn't say anything so as not to ruin the surprise. It was not far, and gave us a chance to settle into the feel of the pack and the gait of walking with snowshoes. I don't remember much from that night. Only the beginning of our group journaling experience (I think it began that night?). It's the following day that stands out in my memory…

Jake and I were chosen to be leaders of the day. Jake started off in front, breaking trail in the foot deep snow. It was hard work, and I knew that. So after a little while, I offered to take the lead and break some trail. Holding the map and compass, I forged ahead, conscious that my job was aiding my comrades (if I did it well). With that in mind, I sought easier ground and was delighted to discover some shallower snow. I

began following some animal tracks, thinking that they are smarter than us and would take a less strenuous path. It didn't occur to me that this creature (likely a squirrel, as I think back) was much lighter than a human with a heavy pack… Suddenly, I saw a break below my snowshoes and the front of my snowshoes began to sink into the inky blackness. I cried out and threw the map behind me, not wanting to ruin it. I struggled to be upright—my pack was weighing me down from behind and my snowshoes were preventing me from lifting my body. I struggled to get my pack off… the belt was under the water and it was so cold. Someone (I think Beth?) spread out on the ice beside me and helped me with my pack. I'm not sure who helped me out of the water… the next thing I knew, I was standing on the (shore?), shivering, and Sara was instructing Jen to help me get changed into dry clothes. I also heard Sara instructing others to gather wood for a fire. Then I realized that Jake, who had been directly behind me, had also fallen into the ice.

So there I was, in the middle of the snowy Wisconsin woods with people I had only just met, stripping down naked in order to put on dry clothes. I remember that the self-consciousness had only struck me later, but it did come. I also remember how long it took to warm up. I sat by the fire, eating a horrible piece of flat, sweet bread (Flaps, which I grew to hate) with peanut butter on it, wearing Jessica's coat, and shivering. All I wanted to do was to stay there. As it was taking so long to warm up, it occurred to me that I hadn't removed my underwear (I didn't have a spare bra). Or maybe Jen asked me about it, I don't remember fully. So at some point I walked into the woods and took care of that, which helped. Then I was incredibly self-conscious—not wearing a bra, and also holding my bra over the fire to dry. Eventually, Sara said we should get moving. So we packed up, put out the fire and scattered the ashes, and started walking again…

I honestly don't remember much more of that first 5 days. I only remember that I was pretty miserable, and very self-absorbed. I think I must have kept that to myself, because when we got back to Loberg, Jen gave me a note which spoke of how impressed she was in how I handled the experience. But internally, I had been very self-absorbed—thinking about how much more suffering I was experiencing than my companions, somehow using that as a reason to think that I deserved more sympathy. I reminded myself often about how I had a frozen lump of clothes in my backpack that would never dry, and thus was having to carry that much extra weight around. I

thought of no one else. And when we returned, I asked permission to use the dryer so that I could at least dry my clothes before the next part of the experience—the 14 day expedition (we only had one day back at camp).

The 14 day expedition is a bit more of a blur. I remember the beginning, and we all struggled on our new mode of transportation—waxable backcountry touring skis. The first few days we struggled to get the wax just right, which caused skis to either have too much or too little grip (mostly the latter). I do remember my day of being leader of the day. We had climbed a hill the day before and built snow shelters beneath a fire watchtower (I think that's what it was?). On my day, it was time to go downhill. The snow was deep, and we were still pretty unsteady on our skis. There was lots of falling that day, and for a time I skied in the front with Jen (and Preston as a shadow of sorts). The two of us were focused on learning how to get up by ourselves in deep snow with heavy packs, and how to traverse the hillside so we didn't pick up as much speed. Jen and I were enjoying the challenge, but at one point I remember looking behind me and realizing that others were not having much fun, and were also a bit behind us (probably too far). I feel like Sara reminded me that I was leader, as again I was pretty self-absorbed. We had a conversation, and she encouraged me to think about what the group needed from me. Everyone was exhausted that day. I think we only went a mile or two, I can't fully remember. I do remember making the decision as leader of the day to stop earlier than we had originally planned.

Another vivid memory I have from the 14 day expedition was a conversation I had with Sara. I was made a comment about the trees, and said something about how God had created them in this remote (or what felt remote to me at the time) place where so few people could enjoy them. My comment was based in an assumption that the purpose of the trees was for human enjoyment. I remember Sara saying something like maybe the trees aren't here for us, but simply at the pleasure of their Creator. This is my first memory of instrumentalism vs. inherent value. My comment was based in an anthropocentric perspective of the trees being valuable because of they benefit humans aesthetically. Sara's comment argued for the trees' right to exist apart from human benefit. Of course, I didn't understand it in those terms at the time, but I remember it being eye-opening for me at the time, and thinking about it for a while as we skied. Today I remember that interaction as a pivotal change for me.

I also remember our final morning quite vividly. It was cold—perhaps the coldest we had experienced. I don't remember the exact temperature. Because it was our last day, spirits were up. They may not have been otherwise, given the temps. The sky was clear, and the world sparkled with ice crystals catching the rays of the early morning sun. It was crisp, silent, and breathtakingly beautiful. It's not like we were in a sought-after outdoor location. We were just camped in some northern Michigan woods, with a small clearing nearby and a large fallen cedar tree that we had used for firewood. But the beauty of the morning took our breath away (probably partly due to the cold as well), and left us in a kind of silent awe as we went about our morning chores. As the day went on, the sun warmed us and it got to be above 20 degrees. We shed layers, and for the first time on the trip I was only in my baselayer and a fleece vest. We got to the ski area cross country trails, which were groomed, and made good time to our final destination (despite a rather epic group fall on a groomed hill). We couldn't have asked for a better last day, really.

The experience progressed, taking us to Colorado for a conference, then Texas and Big Bend National Park, the Rio Grande River, and Mexico. The trip in Big Bend/Rio Grande was perhaps one of the more impactful experiences I've ever had. I remember struggling with my pride quite a bit (not wanting to accept help, not wanting to admit that I wasn't as good at canoeing as I thought I was, etc). It was humbling and an opportunity to gain a lot of self-awareness. I also remember gaining a different kind of appreciation for the natural world—and this was something I had wanted from this 6-month experience. Going back to the thoughts I had when I was initially driving from Colorado to Wisconsin—I wanted to experience the natural world differently. I didn't know what that meant, just that something had been missing. I think I found what I was looking for in Texas, of all places. There was a simplicity and a beauty to everything, if one had eyes to see. I remember being stymied by the small flowers carving out an existence from the arid desert. They were tiny, and one footprint could destroy them. They struggled to grow and bloom in such a hard place—why? Aside from these small flowers, it seemed everything else that was growing had battle-ready armor. Everything had thorns, spines, or some means to protect it from being touched or eaten. Sometimes if you weren't paying attention to where you were walking, the thorns

would snag your sleeping pad and take a bite out of the ensolite. And then there was the river… the lifeblood of the desert. And yet it was too toxic to use for drinking water due to the impact of fertilization and damming upstream. What did that mean for the animals that nonetheless relied on its waters? And the plants? The aquatic life?

I remember writing about turtles. We started seeing them on the first day of our canoeing trip. Someone made the comment that we will probably get tired of seeing turtles. And I wrote about how I never wanted to get tired of seeing them. That I wanted to notice and celebrate every one as a unique turtle, different and valuable in its uniqueness. I also remember the role play Rob and Jon did to help instill some of the concepts of the book we were reading (still one of my favorites)—*To Know As We Are Known*. Jon played the role of the scientist, who knew all about the flora in the region—scientific name, the way it lives and breeds, etc. Rob played the role of "Cactus Pete," the desert sage who didn't know the scientific details of the flora, but somehow seemed to know them better than the scientist. He had his own name for each living thing—not the scientific one, but a name that told the story of relationship. He couldn't tell you about how the seeds of a particular plant dispersed or the chemical makeup of the soil, but he could tell you when you would see the most vibrant colors, or how one might provide better shade than another. As I've thought back on this, I can see the way this illustrated the difference between an I/It and an I/Thou relationship with the natural world.

And that theme continued on the trip. One night we all lay on a rock, on the Mexico side of the river, watching in awe as lightening flashed overhead –it seemed there was no sound, no thunder, just streaks of light across the starry sky. We were silent, and the rock felt sacred that night. On the last day of our paddling trip, we said farewell to the river, calling it "friend," for it had taught us much and had allowed us to be part of it for a brief while.

And as I think back to those first 10 weeks of our 6-month experience, these two trips stand out in contrast. The winter trip was about survival. Aside from a couple of moments of beauty, where I set aside my own self-absorption to notice the world around me, the trip was about my own sense of self-awareness, my ability to transcend my environment, my ability to persevere in harsh conditions. In some ways the desert trip was similar—it, too, was a harsh environment and required extra work to survive

(like carrying all of our water). But as the trip progressed it became less about survival, less about me, and more about the amazing world around me. Why was this the case? Did I need the former trip in order to open the door to this relational awareness? Could I have experienced the latter without the former? Did it have something to do with the environment itself, or the mode of travel? I'm afraid I can't answer these questions as I only know how it happened to me. I can say, however, that most of my expeditionary river trips have been similar. I often wonder if there's something about being carried along by current, learning to work with the current, that sets the stage for a different sort of relationship with the natural world.

Somewhere along the way things changed for me. It was a very slow change, and took some 10-15 years before I really noticed what was happening. During my time at Honey Rock, I learned that the wilderness was a place for character development—a place to be tried and tested. We used to call it "a place apart"—apart from culture, counter-cultural. We would talk and theorize about how students (always adamantly calling them "students" rather than "participants") could come to the woods, particularly the Northwoods of Wisconsin and the UP, and that the wilderness would strip them from what was familiar, which provided a catalyst for self-awareness and character growth. A well-thought-out program design would help facilitate this process, as well as a well-chosen and designed route. That was the formula, though of course we never called it a formula.

Those pieces of my early experiences at Honey Rock—the trees in the middle of the snowy forest and wondering why they were there, the turtles and Cactus Pete—planted a seed that I didn't know was there. The more I traveled in the woods, the more trips I led and experiences I had, the more I began to wonder "why here?" Sure, it had been engrained in me that the wilderness was a catalyst for character development—the moral equivalent to war. But it wasn't the only one. People could say the same thing about summer camp, or moving to a new town, or playing on a sports team. So what made the outdoors significant? There was something different and unique about the more-than-human world, something that wasn't part of other experiences. I felt it most on river trips. Without fail, the river became my friend. It caressed me as it carried me along, even though at any moment it could smash me

against the rocks. I learned a sort of dance with the river, an understanding. There was a constant flow of power, and by seeking to understand that flow, to work with it and not against it, we danced. It gave me sustenance, eased my burden. What did I give in return?

Perhaps this is why it always felt wrong to pee in the river. I know it's considered ok by LNT standards—"the solution to pollution is dilution," right? But somehow it just felt wrong. I used to tell my students, "Don't pee in the river! It will change the Ph balance of the water and then affect the aquatic life!" Of course, that wasn't true, and I knew it. A little urine would have little effect. But to pee on something does one of two things—it marks it as mine, my territory (in an animalistic sense), or it marks it as insignificant and worthless.

For a long time I was very transitory, never staying in the same place for more than a year or two. Even if I stayed in the same area (South Carolina), I moved around a lot, trying to land somewhere. In 2011 that changed. After a year at my new job in Northern California, I moved into a new-to-me apartment, and I fell in love with it. There was nothing fancy about it; it was just an a mother-in-law apartment over a detached garage. My landlady lived next door, and she owned acres of property—an oak savanna with towering black walnut and pecan trees orange trees, and prolific wildlife. For the first time in my life, I stayed put. For eight years, I lived in that apartment, going to the laundromat every week because there were no washer/dryer hookups. It was a small price to pay. And then I discovered the birds.

It started after I decided I wanted to hang a bird feeder in the branch of the big oak that framed my front porch (I used to joke that I lived in a treehouse, because the oak was so large and imposing). I waited until I knew my landlady wasn't home (she would have been worried that I would injure myself and sue her), and then I donned my harness, threw a climbing rope over that branch, and used my ascenders to climb up. It was the only way to get to that particular branch without a very tall extension ladder. I drilled a hole, screwed in an eyebolt, and hung a bird feeder that I'd purchased from Tractor Supply. Some time later I added a finch feeder, attaching it to one of the posts of my front deck. And of course there was the hummingbird feeder.

Redding was hot, but the mornings were almost always nice. I developed a habit of making my coffee and sitting on the deck every morning, watching the birds and the

wildlife. And I began to meet my neighbors. There was the scrub jay who used to sit on the deck railing, waiting for me to throw him a peanut then hurrying off to bury it someplace. There was the oak titmouse, flitting about in staccato style, looking for sunflower seeds. The lesser goldfinches would come in droves, completely engulfing the finch feeder and occasionally joined by goldfinches and pine siskins. During migration I would see black-headed grosbeaks. And then there was the ever-present Anna's hummingbird. The calliope and black-chinned hummers would give him a run for his money during migration, but he valiantly defended the feeder on the corner of Sweetwater Trail. I called him Lord Barrington, as any hummer who has claimed his own feeder must be considered a lord. Sometimes I would also see a Nuttall's woodpecker and a pair of white-breasted nuthatches. And then there was the red-shouldered hawk, who nested in the huge redwood across the street. The Acorn woodpeckers never came to my feeder, but they were common visitors to the surrounding trees. And one spring a pair of starlings nested in one of the cavities.

One day there was a commotion in the oak, and a Cooper's hawk came out of the sky and landed on my deck railing not 20 feet from me. Another time I was coming home from work after dark, it was probably late fall or early winter, and was startled to death when a northern flicker flew straight at me from above the front door. He must have been roosting for the night just under the eave, and I likely startled him to death as well.

The wild turkeys were also a common presence. Their numbers grew over the years, and Mary, my landlady, would complain about the scratching they would do in her gardens. "Woodchips everywhere!" she would throw her hands up in frustration. She also hated the deer, and the ground squirrels, and the coyotes and foxes. Once I was out for a walk, and I felt a presence overhead. I looked up, and there were two adult turkeys sitting on a branch of a grey pine, with three poults on either side. The adults had their wings outstretched over the poults, looking down on me with disdain. I wasn't aware that turkeys roosted in trees, especially not that high up. They are better at flying than we give them credit for.

Watching the birds every day, along with other wildlife, and staying in the same place for 8 years had an affect on me. I began to learn their patterns, how the seasons and the weather affected them. I realized that it wasn't the temperature that dictated

their migration patterns, but the amount of daylight. I learned how to identify different species, but more than that I learned what their particular habits were—how scrub jays would bury their peanuts and acorns, but acorn woodpeckers would find holes in trees and electric poles to hide them in (one year deciding that the vents in my swamp cooler were ideal for storage, they deposited over 100 gallons worth of acorns which had to be cleaned out in the spring). I learned that the Anna's hummingbird was one of the smallest but also one of the loudest. The gang of turkeys would come through in the morning and evening, and roost in the middle of the day. I would only see the bushtits if I walked down the road to the little seasonal creek, where there were willows and manzanitas.

And then it happened. On Memorial Day, 2016, at approximately 5:30am, the oak tree fell.

Mary had been worried about the tree and had had an arborist come out several months earlier to diagnose it. I was worried she would have it cut down, but the arborist seemed to think that it might make it, if she moved her wooden planter that was causing some rot. The day before it fell I had noticed that the parts of the roots that were exposed looked like they were breaking up. And I was awakened by what felt like a short-lived earthquake. It was miraculous that it didn't cause any major damage—narrowly missing both my apartment and Mary's house and coming to rest between them. I went outside and cried.

The oak tree was the matriarch. She was the center of it all.

And yet, it wasn't really about the tree at all. Or the birds. Or the seasons. The difference was in me—the shift in my awareness, the time that I gave to seeing, to knowing. The tree had been the same as it had been for the hundreds of years—taller, wider perhaps. She became part of me, and I was part of her. The relationship was central.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet and Consent

Title of Study: Sublime Encounters: A phenomenological enquiry into the significance of place relations in outdoor education[27]

About the study

This research is part of a PhD thesis, which is looking into the nature of human relationships with the more-than-human (natural) world in outdoor experiential education through the lens of phenomenology. The study is interdisciplinary in that it is combining philosophical reasoning with qualitative research methods. The qualitative portion of the research will, using autoethnography, seek to capture how I have experienced my relationship with nature through various constructed and non-constructed lived experiences.

Some questions you may have about the research project

Why have you requested my consent and what will I be required to do?

You are being asked for consent because some of the stories and experiences I plan to describe in the research will likely involve you, making you a participant in the data. These stories will be shared from my perspective, and thus may differ from your perspective and/or recollection of the same event. While names in the narratives will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality, I recognize that I do not own these stories. These are shared experiences and would likely be represented differently by each member of the group. I acknowledge the subjective nature of memory, and recognize that narratives are not descriptions of fact but rather descriptions of meanings. The meanings described are mine and do not represent those of the group or any individuals within the group.

Additional data may include entries written in group journals that were part of my experiences. Some of these entries may have been authored by you. I will not claim authorship of any entries that are not mine, and the anonymity of the actual author will be protected (references will be cited simply as "group journal").

While your anonymity will be protected in recorded data and written analyses, it may be possible for a reader to determine your information based on my background information as it

[27] Smartsurvey.co.uk was used to disseminate this information and collect responses: https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/YFXCUZ/

connects to your background. For example, a comparison of resumes may indicate that we worked together for a time. As a result, full anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I may conduct interviews with co-participants from past experiences, which would include you. Participation in an interview is voluntary. The interviews will be recorded with an audio-recording device, and may be conducted through video-conferencing software. Software chosen for this purpose will be analysed for security features to protect privacy. Additional recordings may be made of my reflections on our shared experiences. These electronic files will be stored on my computer and backed up to an external hard drive, both of which are password protected and kept in a locked office. Your name will be changed to a pseudonym in the research to protect your identity, and the electronic files will be destroyed after the research is made public.

In addition to this opportunity to provide consent, you will be given an additional opportunity to read the researcher's work prior to submission should you choose to do so. At that time, you will have the opportunity to provide comment and/or withdraw your consent without providing a reason.

Other than agreeing to the above, there is nothing more you need to do regarding this research.

What if I do not wish to take part or change my mind during the study?

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent at any time without having to provide a reason for doing so.

What happens to the research data?

The data will be coded, combined into themes, and analysed through a sociocultural lens as well as a philosophical lens that I will develop as part of the research. Data will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer drive and/or in my office, which is kept locked. Prior to submission, all names will be changed to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Data that is not part of the researcher's personal library (recorded reflections and interviews) will be destroyed after the research as been made public.

How will the research be reported?

The research will be written into a doctoral thesis and submitted to both the University of Cumbria and Lancaster Univeristy as part of my PhD programme. Some parts of the data may also be delivered in conference papers, journal articles, and/or a book.

How can I find out more information?

Please contact me directly for more info: Amy Smallwood amy.smallwood@uni.cumbria.ac.uk +1 719-239-4482

University of Cumbria Research Office Lancaster Campus, Lancaster, LA1 3JD United Kingdom

What if I want to complain about the research

Initially you should contact the researcher directly. However, if you are not satisfied or wish to make a more formal complaint you should contact Diane Cox, Director of Research Office, University of Cumbria, Bowerham Road, Lancaster, LA1 3JD. diane.cox@cumbria.ac.uk

2. Participant Consent

Please answer the following questions

1. Have you read and understood the information sheet about this study? *

Yes

No

2. Have you been able to ask questions and had enough information? *

Yes

No

3. Do you understand that you are free to refuse consent for this study at any time, and without having to give a reason for refusal?

Yes

No

4. Do you agree to allow the researcher to describe her version of experiences in which you may have taken part, changing your name to maintain anonymity? *

Yes

No

5. Do you agree to potentially be interviewed as part of this research? *

Yes

No

6. Do you agree to your interview or focus group to be audio recorded? *

Yes

No

7. Please print your name and the date if you wish to take part in the research and feel you have had enough information about what is involved. By printing your name and date below and submitting this form, you are attesting to your understanding of this research project and are providing conent to your involvement in the research, as indicated by the preceding questions. *

8. Date: *

Abbreviations and Definitions

Abbreviations

CNS	Connectedness to Nature Scale
HNC	Human Nature Connection
LNT	Leave No Trace
NCS	Nature Connectedness Scale
OAE	Outdoor Adventure Education
WLP	Wilderness Leadership Practicum

Definitions

Anthropocentrism	This word is used to refer to approaches within philosophy and education that assume or imply humans as having more value than other members of the biotic community.
Biotic Community	This phrase is used to refer to the interacting network of living organisms in a particular habitat or ecosystem and the relationships and interactions between them.
More-than-human world	This phrasing is taken from the work of David Abram (2017) and attempts to reference non-human entities in a way that includes humans as part of the biotic/abiotic community.
Nature	Throughout the thesis and based on context, I use the word “nature” interchangeably with “more-than-human world.” I recognize the problems often associated with the word “nature,” however I have chosen to use it to make the reader’s experience less cumbersome.

Outdoor Adventure Education	For the purposes of this project, I will be utilising the definition provided by Ewert & Sibthorp (2014) “A variety of teaching and learning activities and experiences usually involving a close interaction with an outdoor natural setting and containing elements of real or perceived danger or risk in which the outcome, although uncertain, can be influenced by the actions of the participants and circumstances.”
Romanticism	Recognizing that there are different ways this word is defined, I use it here to refer to the intellectual movement that emerged in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It is also used to refer specifically to Romantic literature and the works of Wordsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau.

References

Abram, D. (2017) *The spell of the senuous*. 2nd edn. New York: Vintage Books.

Alagona, P. and Simon, G. (2012) "Leave no trace starts at home: A response to critics and vision for the future," *Ethics, Policy and Environment*. Routledge , 15(1), pp. 119–124. doi: 10.1080/21550085.2012.672695.

Andre, E. (2012) "It is time for a global ethic, not just a local etiquette," in Martin, B. and Wagstaff, M. (eds.) *Controversial issues in adventure programming*. 1st edn. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 248–253.

Association for Experiential Education (no date) *What is Experiential Education*. Available at: https://www.aee.org/what-is-experiential-education (Accessed: April 8, 2023).

Baires, S. E. (2018) "Introduction: dynamic worlds, shifting paradigms," in Baltus, M. R. and Baires, S. E. (eds.) *Relational engagements of the Indigenous Americas: alterity, ontology, and shifting paradigms*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. vii–xv.

Baltus, M. R. (2018) "Vessels of change: everyday relationality in the rise and fall of Cahokia," in Baltus, M. R. and Baires, S. E. (eds.) *Relational engagements of the Indigenous Americas: alterity, ontology, and shifting paradigms*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 63–86.

Baltus, M. R. and Baires, S. E. (2018a) "Conclusions: tying things together," in Baltus, M. R. and Baires, S. E. (eds.) *Relational engagements of the Indigenous Americas: alterity, ontology, and shifting paradigms*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 153–160.

Baltus, M. R. and Baires, S. E. (eds.) (2018b) *Relational engagements of the Indigenous Americas: alterity, ontology, and shifting paradigms*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Balzer, T. (2013) *Thin places : an evangelical journey into Celtic Christianity*. Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers.

Baumeister, R. F. (2005) *The cultural animal: human nature, meaning, and social life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Beery, T. H. and Wolf-Watz, D. (2014) "Nature to place: rethinking the environmental connectedness perspective," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Academic Press, 40, pp. 198–205. doi: 10.1016/J.JENVP.2014.06.006.

Bengson, J., Cuneo, T. and Shafer-Landau, R. (2022) *Philosophical methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berkovitis, E. (1962) *A Jewish critique of the philosophy of Martin Buber*. New York: Yeshiva University.

Berlin, I. (2013) *The roots of romanticism*. Edited by H. Hardy. Princeton University Press. doi: 10.5840/intstudphil200335427.

Bernstein, L. *et al.* (2008) *Climate change 2007: synthesis report*. Geneva: IPCC.

Berry, W. (2012) *The long-legged house*. United Kingdom: Counterpoint Press.

Biser, E. (1963) “Martin Buber,” *Philosophy Today*. Winter 202. Edited by E. N. Zalta. doi: 10.5840/philtoday19637217.

Black, R. W. (1994) “From Concord out: Henry Thoreau and the natural sublime,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, 2(1), pp. 65–75.

Blenkinsop, S. (2005) “Martin Buber: educating for relationship,” *Ethics, Place & Environment*. Routledge, 8(3), pp. 285–307. doi: 10.1080/13668790500348232.

Blenkinsop, S. (2011) “Martin Buber: dialogue, relationship, the other, and the more-than-human world,” in Smith, T. E. and Knapp, C. E. (eds.) *Sourcebook of experiential education: key thinkers and their contributions*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Blenkinsop, S. and Scott, C. (2017) “Becoming teacher/tree and bringing the natural world to students: an educational examination of the influence of the other-than-human world and the great actor on Martin Buber’s concept of the I/Thou,” *Educational Theory*, 67(4), pp. 453–469. doi: 10.1111/edth.12258.

Bonnett, M. (2003) “Retrieving nature: education for a post-humanist age,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. Oxford: Blackwell, 37(4), pp. 551–731.

Bonnett, M. (2009) “Education, sustainability, and the metaphysics of nature,” in McKenzie, M. et al. (eds.) *Fields of green: restorying culture, environment, and education*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Bonnett, M. (2012) “Environmental concern, moral education and our place in nature,” *Journal of Moral Education*. Michael Bonnett, 41(3), pp. 285–300. doi: 10.1080/03057240.2012.691643.

Brady, E. (2012a) “Reassessing aesthetic appreciation of nature in the Kantian sublime,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. University of Illinois Press, 46(1), p. 91. doi: 10.5406/jaesteduc.46.1.0091.

Brady, E. (2012b) “The environmental sublime,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The sublime reader*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 356–365.

Brady, E. (2013) *The sublime in modern philosophy: aesthetics, ethics, and nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brymer, E. (2012) “BASE jumping from the Rialto: plain stupid or something else entirely?,” *The Conversation*. Avalaible at https://theconversation.com/base-jumping-from-the-rialto-plain-stupid-or-something-else-entirely-5875.

Buber, M. (1937) *I and Thou*. Translated by R. G. Smith. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Buber, M. (1958) *Hasidism and modern man*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Buber, M. (1970) *I and Thou*. Touchstone. Translated by W. Kaufmann. New York.

Carman, T. (2016) “Phenomenology,” in Cappelen, H., Gendler, T. S., and Hawthorne, J. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of philosophical methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 179–192. doi: 10.1093/OXFORDHB/9780199668779.013.31.

Cerbone, D. R. (2017) “Phenomenological method and the achievement of recognition,” in D’Oro, G. and Overgaard, S. (eds.) *The Cambridge companion to philosophical methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 295–316. doi: 10.1017/9781316344118.016.

Chang, H. (2008) *Autoethnography as method*. New York: Routledge.

Chitnis, R. (no date) *Drowning a culture twice? Winnemem Wintu fight for cultural survival in northern California*, *International funders for Indigenous peoples*. Available at: https://internationalfunders.org/drowning-a-culture-twice-winnemem-wintu-fight-for-cultural-survival-in-northern-california/ (Accessed: March 5, 2023).

Clewis, R. R. (2019a) “Editor’s introduction,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The sublime reader*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 1–13.

Clewis, R. R. (2019b) “Towards a theory of the sublime and aesthetic awe,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The Sublime Reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 340–354.

Coole, D. and Frost, S. (2010) “Introducing the new materialisms,” in Coole, D. and Frost, S. (eds.) *New materialisms: ontology, agency, and politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 1–43. doi: 10.1215/9780822392996-001.

Cosgriff, M. (2011) “Learning from leisure: developing nature connectedness in outdoor education,” *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2(1), pp. 51–65. doi: 10.1080/18377122.2011.9730343.

Cronon, W. (1996) “The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature,” in Cronon, W. (ed.) *Uncommon ground*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Crosby, A. (1981) “A critical look: the philosophical foundations of experiential education,” *Journal of Experiential Education*. SAGE Publications, 4(1), pp. 9–15. doi: 10.1177/105382598100400103.

Daniel, B. (2010) “Canvas, catalyst, crucible: exploring the role of the setting in the wilderness expedition experience,” *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*, 2(2), pp. 133–136.

Denshire, S. and Lee, A. (2013) “Conceptualizing autoethnography as assemblage: accounts of occupational therapy practice,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (12), pp. 221–236.

Descartes, R. (1996) *Meditations on first philosophy: with selections from the objections and replies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DesJardins, J. R. (2012) *Environmental ethics: an introduction to environmental philosophy*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Dewey, J. (2007) *Experience and education*. United Kingdom: Free Press.

Dillard, A. (1974) *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: HarperCollins.

Dillard, A. (1982) *Teaching a stone to talk*. New York: HarperCollins.

Drasdo, H. (1973) *Education and the mountain centres*. Second ext. Penrith, Cumbria: Adventure Education.

Emerson, R. W. (1872) “Letter from Ralph Waldo Emerson to John Muir,” *John Muir correspondence*. Available at https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/1425.

Emerson, R. W. (2012) *Nature*. United States: Renaissance Classics.

Ewert, A. W. and Sibthorp, J. (2014) *Outdoor adventure education: foundations, theory, and research*. 1st ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Forsey, J. (2007) “Is a theory of the sublime possible?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65(4), pp. 381–389.

Freire, P. (2005) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th anniv. Translated by M. B. Ramos. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Gabrielsen, L. E. *et al.* (2016) “Why randomized trials are challenging within adventure therapy research: lessons learned in Norway,” *Journal of Experiential Education*. SAGE PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 39(1), pp. 5–14. doi: 10.1177/1053825915607535.

Gamble, C. N., Hanan, J. S. and Nail, T. (2019) “What is new materialism?,” *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. Routledge, 24(6), pp. 111–134. doi: 10.1080/0969725X.2019.1684704.

Garber, S. (2014) *Visions of vocation*. Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarstiy Press.

Garrard, G. (2006) *Counter-enlightenments: from the eighteenth century to the present*. New York: Routledge.

Gilbertson, K. *et al.* (2022) *Outdoor education: methods and strategies*. 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003a) “Foundations of place: a multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education,” *American Educational Research Journal*. SAGE Publications, 40(3), pp. 619–654. doi: 10.3102/00028312040003619.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003b) “The best of both worlds: a critical pedagogy of place,” *Educational Researcher*. Sage PublicationsSage CA: Thousand Oaks, CA, 32(4), pp. 3–12. doi: 10.3102/0013189X032004003.

Haber, A. F. (2009) “Animism, relatedness, life: post-western perspectives,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*. Cambridge University Press, 19(3), pp. 418–430. doi: 10.1017/S0959774309000602.

Hahn, K. (1960) *Address at the annual meeting of the Outward Bound Trust.*[Speech]. Annual meeting of the Outward Bound Trust. 20/July.

Harrison, S. (2010) “‘Why are we here?’ taking ‘place’ into account in UK outdoor environmental education,” *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 10(1), pp. 3–18. doi: 10.1080/14729671003669321.

Hay, R. (1988) “Toward a theory of sense of place,” *Trumpeter*, 5(4), pp. 159–164.

Henderson, B. (2008) *Seek simplicity to preserve complexity: the subtle and profound importance of story, place and technology in outdoor education* [Speech]. Marina Ewald & Kurt Hahn Address, Association for Experiential Education international conference. 8/November.

Hepburn, R. W. (1996) “Landscape and the metaphysical imagination,” *Environmental Values*, 5(3), pp. 191–204.

“High Road instructor’s manual” (2001). Honey Rock Camp. Wheaton College.

Hirsch, E. D. (1996) *The schools we need and why we don’t have them*. New York: Doubleday.

Hobbes, T. (2008) *Leviathan*. Edited by J. C. A. Gaskin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hokkanen, S. (2017) “Analyzing personal embodied experiences: autoethnography, feelings, and fieldwork,” *Translation and Interpreting*. University of Western Sydneys, 9(1), pp. 24–35. doi: 10.12807/ti.109201.2017.a03.

Honan, E. and Bright, D. (2016) “Writing a thesis differently,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Routledge, 29(5), pp. 731–743. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2016.1145280.

Hughes, S. A. and Pennington, J. L. (2018) “Autoethnography : introduction and overview,” in *Autoethnography: process, product, and possibility for critical social research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781483398594.

Husserl, E. (1999) *The idea of phenomenology*. Translated by L. Hardy. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic.

Hutson, G. (2012) “The seeds of leave no trace grow well beyond backcountry boundaries,” in Martin, B. and Wagstaff, M. (eds.) *Controversial Issues in Adventure Programming*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 243–247.

Hycner, R. H. (1999) “Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data,” in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds.) *Qualitative research*. London, pp. 143–164.

Ingold, T. (2006) “Rethinking the animate, re-animating thought,” *Ethnos*. Routledge , 71(1), pp. 9–20. doi: 10.1080/00141840600603111.

James, S. P. (2019) “Natural meanings and cultural values,” *Environmental Ethics*, 41(1), pp. 3–16.

James, W. (1911) “The Moral equivalent of war,” in *Memories and studies*. New York: Longman Green and Co, pp. 267–296.

Jickling, B., Blenkinsop, S., Timmerman, N., *et al.* (2018) *Wild pedagogies : touchstones for re-negotiating education and the environment in the Anthropocene*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jickling, B., Blenkinsop, S., Morse, M., *et al.* (2018) “Wild pedagogies: six initial touchstones for early childhood environmental educators,” *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Cambridge University Press, 34(2), pp. 159–171. doi: 10.1017/aee.2018.19.

Kafle, N. P. (2013) “Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified,” *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5(1), pp. 181–200. doi: 10.3126/bodhi.v5i1.8053.

Kant, I. (2008) *Critique of pure reason*. Translated by M. Weigelt. New York: Penguin Classics.

Kaufmann, W. (1970) “I and You: a prologue,” in *I and Thou*. New York: Touchstone.

Kazi, E. (2023a) *6 Touchstones*. Available at: https://wildpedagogies.com/6 Touchstones (Accessed: February 18, 2023).

Kazi, E. (2023b) *Wild pedagogies in the classroom*. Available at: https://wildpedagogies.com/about/in-context (Accessed: January 29, 2023).

Kellert, S. R. and Wilson, E. O. (eds.) (1993) *The Biophilia hypothesis*. Washington D. C.: Island Press.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013) *Braiding sweetgrass*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lopez, B. (1999) *About this life: journeys on the threshold of memory*. New York: Vintage Books.

Louv, R. (2006) *Last child in the woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Loynes, C. (2017) “Theorising of outdoor education: purpose and practice,” in Jeffs, T. and Ord, J. (eds.) *Rethinking outdoor, experiential, and Informal education: beyond the confines*. London: Routledge, pp. 35–56.

Loynes, C. (2018) “Leave more trace,” *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*. Sagamore Publishing, LLC, 10(3), pp. 179–186. doi: 10.18666/jorel-2018-v10-i3-8444.

MacDonald, R. H. (1993) *Sons of the empire: the frontier and the Boy Scout movement, 1890-1918*. Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

Macleod, D. I. (1983) *Building character in the American boy : the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their forerunners, 1870-1920*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Mannion, G., Fenwick, A. and Lynch, J. (2013) “Place-responsive pedagogy: learning from teachers’ experiences of excursions in nature,” *Environmental Education Research*. Routledge, 19(6), pp. 792–809. doi: 10.1080/13504622.2012.749980.

Mannion, G. and Lynch, J. (2015) “The primacy of place in education in outdoor settings,” in Humberstone, B., Prince, H., and Henderson, K. A. (eds.) *Routledge International Handbook of Outdoor Studies*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 85–94.

Martin, B. *et al.* (2017) *Outdoor leadership: theory and practice*. 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Martin, P. (2004) “Outdoor adventure in promoting relationships with nature,” *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 8(1), pp. 20–28.

Mayer, F. S. and Frantz, C. M. P. (2004) “The connectedness to nature scale: a measure of individuals’ feeling in community with nature,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Academic Press, 24(4), pp. 503–515. doi: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2004.10.001.

Mcphie, J. (2019) *Mental health and wellbeing in the Anthropocene*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1007/978-981-13-3326-2.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *The Phenomenology of perception*. Translated by C. Smith. New York: Humanities Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. and Landes, D. A. (translator) (2012) *Phenomenology of perception (original: Phénoménologie de la perception, 1945)*. New York: Routledge.

Midgley, M. (1992) "Philosophical plumbing," in Griffiths, A. (ed.) *The impulse to philosophise*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 139–152. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511563829.010.

Moore, G. E. (1993) *Principia ethica*. 2nd ed. Edited by T. Baldwin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological research methods*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America : SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412995658.

Nash, R. F. (1982) *Wilderness & the American mind*. 4th ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Nicol, R. (2013) "Returning to the richness of experience: is autoethnography a useful approach for outdoor educators in promoting pro-environmental behaviour?," *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. Taylor & Francis, 13(1), pp. 3–17. doi: 10.1080/14729679.2012.679798.

Nicol, R. (2014) "Entering the fray: The role of outdoor education in providing nature-based experiences that matter," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Routledge, 46(5), pp. 449–461. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-5812.2011.00840.x.

Nisbet, E. K., Zelenski, J. M. and Murphy, S. A. (2009) "The nature relatedness scale: linking individuals' connection with nature to environmental concern and behavior," *Environment and Behavior*. SAGE PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 41(5), pp. 715–740. doi: 10.1177/0013916508318748.

Oelschlaeger, M. (1991) *The idea of wilderness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Oppezzo, M. and Schwartz, D. L. (2014) "Give your ideas some legs: the positive effect of walking on creative thinking," *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 40(4), pp. 1142–1152. doi: 10.1037/a0036577.

Orr, D. (1992) *Ecological literacy: education and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Outward Bound (2019) *Outward Bound today*. Available at: https://www.outwardbound.org/about-outward-bound/outward-bound-today/ (Accessed: November 16, 2019).

Outward Bound (2020) *Kurt Hahn: six declines of modern youth*. Available at: https://www.outwardbound.org/blog/kurt-hahn-six-declines-of-modern-youth/ (Accessed: July 31, 2022).

Palmer, P. J. (1998) *The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2015) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice*. 4th ed. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Phelps, R. (1980) *Being prepared: the application of character building and the beginning of the Boy Scouts of America*. Boston, MA.

Piazza, R. and Degiorgio, V. (2005) "Scattering, rayleigh," in Bassani, F., Liedl, G. L., and Wyder, P. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Condensed Matter Physics*. Elsevier Inc., pp. 234–242. doi: 10.1016/B0-12-369401-9/00648-3.

Pickus, D. (2011) "The you that wasn't enough: Walter Kaufmann and Martin Buber," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 29(4), pp. 98–123.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2013) "Post qualitative research: the critique and the coming after," in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 611–625.

Plumwood, V. (2000) "Integrating ethical frameworks for animals, humans, and nature: a critical feminist eco-socialist analysis," *Ethics and the Environment*, 5(2), pp. 285–322.

Quay, J. (2013) "More than relations between self, others and nature: outdoor education and aesthetic experience," *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. Routledge, 13(2), pp. 142–157. doi: 10.1080/14729679.2012.746846.

Raffan, J. (1993) "The experience of place: exploring land as teacher," *Journal of Experiential Education*. SAGE PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 16(1), pp. 39–45. doi: 10.1177/105382599301600109.

Ravenscroft, S. (2017) *An analysis of Martin Buber's I and Thou*. New York: Routledge.

Rawles, K. (2013) "Outdoor adventure in a carbon-light era," in Pike, E. C. J. and Beames, S. (eds.) *Outdoor Adventure and Social Theory*. New York: Routledge, pp. 159–170. doi: 10.4324/9780203114773-22.

Reed-Danahay, D. (ed.) (1997) *Auto/ethnography: rewriting the self and the social*. 1st edn. New York: Routledge.

Rewilding education (no date). Available at: https://www.rewildingeducation.org/rewildingeducation (Accessed: November 26, 2022).

Roberts, J. W. (2012) *Beyond learning by doing : theoretical currents in experiential education*. New York: Routledge.

Roberts, J. W. (2018) "Re-placing outdoor education: diversity, inclusion, and the microadventures of the everyday," *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*. Sagamore Publishing, LLC, 10(1), pp. 20–32. doi: 10.18666/JOREL-2018-V10-I1-8152.

Rossman, G. B. and Rallis, S. F. (2020) *An introduction to qualitative research: learning in the field*. 3rd ed, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Learning in the Field*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi: 10.4135/9781071802694.

Sadala, M. L. A. and Adorno, R. de C. F. (2002) "Phenomenology as a method to investigate the experience lived: a perspective from Husserl and Merleau Ponty's thought," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 37(3), pp. 282–293. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02071.x.

Salmón, E. (2000) “Kincentric ecology: Indigenous perceptions of the human-nature relationship,” *Ecological Applications*. Wiley, 10(5), p. 1332. doi: 10.2307/2641288.

Sandler, R. L. (2007) *Character and environment: a virtue oriented approach to environmental ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schaab, G. L. (2013) “Relational ontology,” in Runehov, A. L. C. and Oviedo, L. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of sciences and religions*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, pp. 1974–1975. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4020-8265-8_847.

Scheflen, A. E. (1964) “The significance of posture in communication systems,” *Interpersonal and Biological Processes*. Routledge, 27(4), pp. 316–331. doi: 10.1080/00332747.1964.11023403.

Schopenhauer, A. (2019) “The world as will and representation,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The sublime reader*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 194–199.

Scott, S. (no date) “Martin Buber (1878-1965),” *International encyclopedia of philosophy*.

Shapshay, S. (2018) *What is the sublime? (according to Kant and Schopenhauer)*, *Erraticus*. Available at: https://erraticus.co/2018/12/04/sublime-experience-kant-schopenhauer/ (Accessed: October 26, 2022).

Shapshay, S. (2019) “A theory of sublime responses, the thin and the thick,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The sublime reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 329–339.

Shaw, P. (2014) “Wordsworth and the sublime,” *The British Library*. The British Library.

Shepard, P. (2002) *Man in the landscape*. 3rd ed. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

Sheridan, J. (2013) “Alienation and integration,” in Kulnieks, A., Longboat, D. R., and Young, K. (eds.) *Contemporary studies in environmental and Indigenous pedagogies*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Sircello, G. (1993) “How Is a theory of the sublime possible?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. JSTOR, 51(4), p. 550. doi: 10.2307/431887.

Smith, D. W. (2018) *Phenomenology*, *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/ (Accessed: January 31, 2021).

Sobel, D. (2004) *Place-based education : connecting classrooms & communities*. Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

Solnit, R. (2005) “The blue of distance,” in *A field guide to getting lost*. New York: Penguin Random House, pp. 109–124.

Stonehouse, P. (2012) *The rough ground of character: a philosophical investigation into character development on a wilderness expedition through a virtue ethical lens*. Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Edinburgh.

Swenson, E. (2015) “The materialities of place-making in the ancient Andes: a critical appraisal of the ontological turn in archaeological interpretation,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 22, pp. 677–712. doi: 10.1007/s10816-014-9202-2.

Telford, J. (2020) “Phenomenological approaches to research in outdoor studies,” in Humberstone, B. and Prince, H. (eds.) *Research methods in outdoor studies*. New York: Routledge, pp. 47–56.

The Boy Scouts of America (2019) *About the BSA*. Available at: https://www.scouting.org/about/ (Accessed: November 16, 2019).

Todd, Z. (2016) “An Indigenous feminist’s take on the ontological turn: ‘ontology’ is just another word for colonialism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 29(1), pp. 4–22. doi: 10.1111/JOHS.12124.

Towers, D. and Loynes, C. (2017) “Finding new ways: developing a time and place responsive approach to outdoor learning.,” *Horizons*, (78), pp. 10–13.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1979) “Space and place: humanistic perspective,” *Philosophy in Geography*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, pp. 387–427. doi: 10.1007/978-94-009-9394-5_19.

Turner, J. M. (2002) “From woodcraft to ‘leave no trace’: wilderness, consumerism, and environmentalism in twentieth-century America,” *Environmental History*, 7(3), pp. 462–484. doi: 10.2307/3985918.

Vernon, F. (2020) “The adventure (sex)pedition: revisiting Kurt Hahn’s educational aims,” *History of Education Review*. Emerald Group Holdings Ltd., 49(1), pp. 101–114. doi: 10.1108/HER-08-2019-0031.

Wattchow, B. (2005) “‘Belonging to proper country’: Australian outdoor education as experiencing relationships in place,” in Dickson, T. J., Gray, T., and Haylle r, B. (eds.) *Outdoor and Experiential Learning: Views from the Top*. Dunedin: Otago University Print, pp. 13–27.

Wattchow, B. and Brown, M. (2011) *A Pedagogy of place: outdoor education for a changing world*. Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Monash University Publishing.

Watts, V. (2013) “Indigenous place-thought and agency amongst humans and non humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!),” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), pp. 20–34.

Whyte, K. P. and Cuomo, C. (2017) “Ethics of caring in environmental ethics: Indigenous and feminist philosophies,” in Gardiner, S. M. and Thompson, A. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of environmental ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/OXFORDHB/9780199941339.013.22.

Wildman, W. J. (2010) “An introduction to relational ontology,” in Polkinghorne, J. (ed.) *The Trinity and an entangled world: relationality in physical science and theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Wise, M. *et al.* (2022) “Habits of connection: from sustainability and saviorship to reciprocity and relationship,” *Journal of Experiential Education*. SAGE PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 0(0). doi: 10.1177/10538259221134876.

Wood, R. E. (1969) *Martin Buber’s ontology: an analysis of I and Thou*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Wordsworth, W. (1974) “The sublime and the beautiful,” in Owen, W. J. B. and Symser, J. W. (eds.) *The prose works of William Wordsworth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 349–360.

Wordsworth, W. (2019) “The sublime and the beautiful,” in Clewis, R. R. (ed.) *The sublime reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 177–183.

Zalasiewicz, J. *et al.* (2011) “The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*. The Royal Society Publishing, 369(1938), pp. 835–841. doi: 10.1098/RSTA.2010.0339.